

Ramayana: A Divine Drama

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

Volume IV

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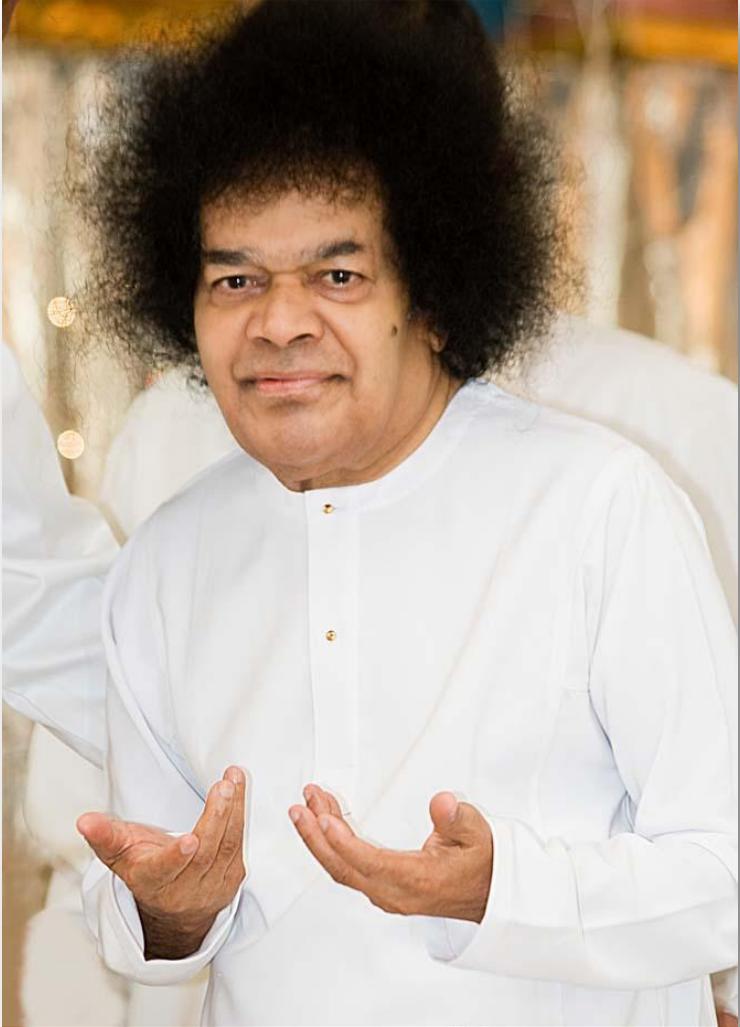
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VOLUME IV

It is Love that creates, sustains and engulfs all. Without Love, no one can claim to have succeeded in deciphering God and His handiwork, the Universe. God is Love; live in Love---that is the direction indicated by the sages. Love can grow only in a well-ploughed heart, free from brambles. So, the heart has to be prepared by means of *Naamasmarana* (constant recital of the Name). Charge every second of time with the Divine current that emanates from the Name.

Develop the firm conviction that God is within you and that you are Divine. Live in love and make your entire life a saga of love. Through love, you can achieve anything. Without love, you cannot be successful. Love helps you to know your Self. In order to experience love, you do not need to approach anybody; nor do you need to exert yourself. Turn your vision inward.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*



God is love, live in love.

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Jaya Jaya Rama Janaki Ram

ShyamalaKomalaNayanabhi Ram

Natavara Shyama Sundara Rama

Pathitodharaka Pattabhi Rama

Bhakthodharaka Prasanthi Rama||

- Inspired composition by Tumuluru

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10. THE VANARAS



Figure 1: Rama with Monkey chiefs

Source of the Photo:

(From Wikipedia)

Description **English:** "Ramachandra standing in a rocky landscape with Lakshmana and the bear and monkey chiefs of his army" "The Chiefs of Rama-Chandra's army. 1. Rama Chandra. 2. Lakshmana. 3. King Sugriva. 4. Hanuman. 5. Jambavan. 6. Angada. 7. Arunda. 8. Nila. 9. Samrambha. 10. Nala. 11. Vanara. 12. Durvinda. 13. Rambha."

Date 19th century (early)

Source http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_image.aspx?objectId=182857&partId=1&searchText=rama&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx&images=on&numPages=10¤tPage=3&asset_id=283217

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10.1 HANUMAN

HANUMAN

Hanuman is a Hindu deity, who is an ardent devotee of Rama, a central character in the Indian epic Ramayana. A general among the Vanaras, an ape-like race of forest-dwellers, Hanuman is an incarnation of the divine and a disciple of Lord Sri Rama in the struggle against the demon king Ravana.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

Hanuman was a great hero in the story of Ramayana. He led an army of Vanaras in his holy mission of searching for the whereabouts of Sita, who was kept in captivity in Lanka by Ravana. He was a very intelligent and faithful servant of Rama. He was a person of noble qualities and great physical strength. In his noble qualities and might he was unparalleled. In fact, one whole chapter, namely Sundara Kanda was devoted to describe the qualities of head and heart in the Ramayana. (*SSS Vol.41 p.115-116*)

PRAYER TO HANUMAN

*Manoj-avam Maruti Tulya Vegam
Jitendriyam Bhudhi-mataam Varishtam
Vaataatmajam Vaanara-yoota-mukhyam
Sri Ramadootam Shirasaa Namami //*

I surrender to Hanuman, the messenger of Lord Rama, whose speed is as swift as the mind and as swift as the wind, who has controlled his sense organs and is the most intelligent among the intelligent ones; who is the son of Vayu and the chief of the monkey tribe.

*Anjaneyam ati-paata-lananam
Kanchanaadri Kamaneeya Vighram
Paarijata-tarumoola vasinam
Bhavayami pavamana nandanam //*

Anjana's son, his face deep red, His body shining like a golden mountain Dwelling always at the root of the Parijata tree, On him, I meditate; the Wind-god's son.

*Yatra yatra Raghunatha Keertanam
Tatra tatra Krita mastakanjalim
Bhaashpa-vaari paripoorna lochanam
Marutim namada rakshasa-antakam //*

In all those nooks and corners, where the name of Lord Raghunath (Rama) is sung about, in all such nooks and corners is he (Hanuman), is present. With tears flooding from the eyes,

salutations to my Lord Maruthi, He who saw the end of all evil ones.

HANUMAN¹: Son of the Wind God and a great "devotee servant" of Rama. He was part man, part monkey. (*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

BIRTH OF HANUMAN²

The eagle which took away Sumitra's pudding bowl dropped it in the lap of Anjana Devi while she was meditating. (She picked up the bowl and happily ate the pudding³. As a result, she gave birth to the great hero of Ramayana (*SSS Vol.41 p.112*). Hanuman was closely connected to Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna as he was born to Anjana Devi out of the sacred pudding that the queens of Dasaratha had partaken. Because of this reason Hanuman felt a close link with Lord Rama and played an important role in His Mission. (*SSB 2002 p.46*)

HANUMAN MEETS RAMA AND LAKSHMANA:

They (Rama and Lakshmana) approached the Rishyamuka Mountain Range. Amidst the hills of that range, Sugriva was

¹ Also spelt as Hanumaan

² Also known as Anjaneya

³ An eagle swooped down and carried away the bowl and left it on the Matanga Mountain. Anjana Devi found the bowl and partook of the sacred pudding. Consequently she became pregnant and gave birth to Hanuman. (*SSS Vol. 41 p.56*)

residing as a refugee, with his Ministers and Courtiers. Sugriva⁴ espied the two brothers, nearing the hills and was astonished at their noble mien and mighty stride. They appeared to be Divine. He called Hanuman to his presence and said, “Mighty hero! Do not delay any longer, go. Inquire who they are and why they have come and from where.”

Sugriva gave him various directions and suggestions to meet all contingencies. Hanuman hurried towards the strangers by leaps and bounds. Reaching their presence, he fell at their feet in great reverence. He said, “Oh Shining Ones, You arouse deep wonder and curiosity in me. Your charming forms are attracting my mind with a strange yearning. You look so tender and innocent. Indeed, you are not mere men. Of that, I am convinced. I guess you are the Divine pair Nara-Narayana, come down on earth. Won’t you tell me why you are going through this jungle with no others to serve or guide you?” Hanuman questioned them in great humility and reverence.

Rama appreciated the devotion and humility of Hanuman. There was a smile on his face when he replied, “We are the sons of Emperor Dasaratha, ruler of Ayodhya. We entered the forest. This is my brother, Lakshmana. My name is Rama. My wife too came with me into the forest; but while we were residing at Panchavati, she was carried away by some Rakshasa when both of us were absent from our cottage. Now we are moving around in this area, searching for her, intent on knowing her whereabouts and on regaining her.” Rama spoke to Hanuman

⁴ See Chapter, *Sugriva* - **Sugriva meets Rama and Lakshmana:**

without any inhibitions, the plain facts which could explain their presence near their range of hills. He said, "Well, I have given you my antecedents and story. I would like to know about yours, too." Hanuman realised that the brothers were his own Overlords. So he fell at their feet once again to pay respectful homage. Rising up, and standing before them on one side, shedding streams of tears in sheer joy and devotion, he could not speak at all.

At last, gathering courage, and standing with folded arms, he said in a faltering voice: "Lord, I am a stupid ignoramus. That is the reason why I questioned you so. Pardon my audacity and my foolishness, Oh, Monarch of Monarchs! You are asking me to tell you my antecedents and present condition, as if you are ordinary mortals who can know them only when told. Is this just? I could not know who you were, bound as I am by the delusion which you yourselves spread over us. Lord, You are mighty and unconquerable. How can the servant be on a par with the Lord and Master? All beings are overcome and deluded by your strategy and plan! I desire to make a declaration, for which my Lord is witness. I know no other activity than adoring my Lord. When the servant is fostered and guarded by his Lord, why should he fear? The might of the Lord is the shield of the servant." Saying so, Hanuman assumed his real form. Rama was filled with delight at the sight of Hanuman. He embraced him, "You are as dear to me as Lakshmana is." He drew Him to himself and fondled him lovingly stroking his head and gently touching his forehead and face. He said, "Hanuman, I shower my Love most on those who serve me and who deem that service as the highest means of liberation." At this, Hanuman said, "Lord, Sugriva, the Ruler of the Vanara hordes, has drawn upon himself

through various circumstances, the enmity of his elder brother Vali and he has been driven out of the kingdom as an exile into this forest where he has taken residence. He too is your servant. He deserves your affection and blessings. Confer Grace on him and release him from the disgrace he is now immersed in. He has the capacity and authority to send millions of monkeys all over the world to seek and find Sita. He is the Monarch of Monkeys. He can achieve victory in that undertaking.” Hanuman detailed the manifold excellences and capabilities of Sugriva, and persuaded Rama to seek his friendship. (*RKRV Part II p.80-82*)

Hanuman spoke to the brothers in sweet, gentle, pleasing words. Rama was struck by the grammatical accuracy of his sentences. They answered readily all his queries and Hanuman was satisfied with their bona fides. He offered to take them to his master and monarch (*on his shoulders*.⁵)

He grew in size and took them on his shoulders. The *darsana* (sight) of Rama and Lakshmana removed all his sins, their *sparshana* (touch) burnt away all the consequences of his deeds in previous lives, and their *Sambhaashana* (conversation) filled his mind with joy. That is the experience of all who welcome the impact of Divinity. As a result, Rama and Sugriva, who had common anxieties and problems, entered into a friendly compact and both got assured that their problems will be successfully solved through help rendered by the other. (*SSS Vol.10 p.90-91*)

As soon as Rama and Lakshmana sat on the shoulders of Hanuman, he felt that all his sins had disappeared. Because of

⁵ *SSB 1977 p.96*

the *darshan* of the Lord, he felt that all his past sins had been rooted out. He became very happy the moment the divine personality of Rama touched his body. At once several good ideas started sprouting up in Hanuman's mind. (*SSB 1977 p.95*)

Hanuman began to feel that some kind of sacred and divine strength has entered his heart and he was feeling very happy. Here he has established the feeling that along with the body, the mind also becomes equally strong and powerful. Where there is a combination of strong body and a strong mind, there is divinity and divine strength. Whatever work we undertake, it should be done with a feeling that it is being done for the pleasure of the Lord. Hanuman was who had such sacred ideas and he always dedicated his work to the Lord and performed the task with such a feeling. (*SSB 1977 p.96*)

Hanuman was thinking within himself that Sugriva would have found good friends when he meets Rama and Lakshmana. He thought that Sugriva's desire will also be fulfilled, and he will be victorious. '*Yad bhavam tat bhavati.*' One's actions will reflect the kind of ideas which one has in one's mind. Because all these good ideas were in the mind of Hanuman, the good ideas in the mind of God also synchronized with them, and the two were in unison. Immediately, Rama, who was on the shoulders of Hanuman, signalled to Lakshmana and assured him that because they had acquired such a good friend, their efforts will also be very successful. (*SSB 1977 p.95*)

SEARCH FOR SITA

Hanuman selected as an Emissary:

Sugriva sent 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*)

Sugriva called together the leaders of the monkey hordes and initiated the arrangements. He entrusted the overall leadership to Hanuman himself. Led by Hanuman, the entire assembly of monkeys shouted, “Jai” to Sugriva and “Jai” to Rama, the Lord. Dancing and jumping in glee, the monkeys hurried on their different demarcated paths, inspired by Hanuman and the holiness of the mission.

Hanuman went East with a group of followers. Sushena and Mandava proceeded North. They searched the Gandhamadana Mountain Range, the Sumera Peak, the Arjuna Mountain, and the Nilagiri Ranges, and the caves therein, until at last they reached the shore of the Northern Sea. The group led by Hanuman were also equally earnest in their search. They cared nothing for sleep or food. They were ready to offer their very lives at the feet of Rama. They desired only one thing, success in their task of serving Rama. From the least to the highest, everyone had the same loyalty and spirit of dedication. Reciting the Name, “Rama” “Rama” “Rama,” they peeped into every nook and corner, every peak and promontory, every cave and cove, every valley and riverbank, for they could penetrate into regions and places where men cannot enter. (*RKR V Part II p. 111-112*)

Hanuman had all the qualifications to be Rama's emissary to Lanka, since he was strong, steady and intelligent. He firmly resolved that he would find Sita at any cost and work on the task with one-pointed attention, devotion and dedication. Nothing would deter the iron resolve of Hanuman to trace Sita's whereabouts. (*SSB 1996 p.56*)

Swayamprabha informs the Vanaras about Sita

One day, they reached the shore of a broad lake. There they espied a woman deeply engaged in austerities. They prostrated before her from a distance. She opened her eyes and seeing their exhausted condition, she said, "Monkeys, you appear very tired and hungry. Refresh yourselves with these fruits," and she supplied plenty of food. When they sat around her, she heard from them the mission on which they were moving about. She said that she was proceeding to the holy place where Rama was in residence. "Listen to my story," she said. "My name is Swayamprabha. I am the daughter of a Celestial Gandharva. I have an Apsaras friend called Hema. While engaged in austerities, Brahma appeared before me and asked me what I needed. He assured me that he would grant me my wish. Then I replied, 'I wish to see God as man, moving on earth!' He said: 'Be here alone. In due course, a number of mighty monkeys will arrive here and halt at your request. From them, you can know of Rama, who is God come in human form. Later, you can look on Rama himself.' Ah! That boon is being realised. The first sign and the second, of its fulfilment are already evident. The first is your arrival. The second is your account of Rama's story and the place where He is in residence. Now, I am as happy as if I have already attained the third, namely, the Darsan of Rama." The

woman was immersed in unbounded ecstasy and delight and shedding tears of joy. The monkeys too were deeply moved and shed tears of delight. Meanwhile, the woman began introspecting with eyes closed. She broke the silence with the announcement, “Monkeys! On seashore, in a beautiful City, at the centre of a charming garden, alone, all by herself, Sita is bewailing her fate. You will see her without doubt. Be assured of this. Proceed in confidence and with courage.”

Angada asks Hanuman to cross the ocean over to the land of Rakshasas:

The Vanaras gathered around the Crown Prince of their kingdom, Angada⁶. Vanara elders rose as one and pleaded, “Prince, you are the heir-apparent to our kingdom. It is not right and proper that you should cross over to the land of Rakshasas. It is against the canons of royalty. This is a task which you have to assign to some servant of the kingdom. Angada looked around, and looking at Hanuman, he said, “Oh Son of the Wind-God, you are the dedicated servant of Rama. Your devotion is indeed deep. You were blessed first among all of us with the Darsan of Rama. Through your intelligence, diplomacy and moral pressure, you established friendship between Rama and our ruler, Sugriva. And now, you are observing silence, when we are involved with difficulties in the execution of the mission of Rama. I find it difficult to understand the meaning of this silence.” Angada extolled Hanuman still further and said, “There is no adventure that you cannot tackle successfully. You are strong, you are

⁶ See Chapter *Angada* – **SEARCH FOR SITA**

highly intelligent. You are endowed with all the virtues. Evaluate your own skills, capacities and excellences, and rise.” The words of Angada filled Hanuman with his erstwhile strength. He rose with a sudden gesture and said, “Oh Vanaras! Wait here, all of you, awaiting my return. Wandering all these days through hills and dales, jungles and plains you have had no time to rest awhile. Eat the fruits and tubers available in this area and station yourselves here. I shall, this instant, leap over the ocean, enter Lanka, see Sita and come back. I have no other work than carrying out the command of Rama. How else can we make our lives worthwhile than by earning His Grace?”

Hanuman’s leap and flight into the sky

With these words, he raised his folded palms in salutation before the vast gathering of monkeys. He took leave of Angada, the Crown Prince. The monkey hordes were raising in unison the exultant cry, “Jai Rama,” “Victory to Rama.” Hanuman pictured in his mind the glorious Form of Rama, and with one leap into the sky, he was off over the sea. Unable to withstand the tremendous airflow caused by his leap and flight, trees on the hills were uprooted and carried along. The impact of his leap was so great that the peak on which he stood sank into the nether regions.

Seeing him fly across, the sea thought within itself thus: “This Hanuman is a servant of Rama. He is proceeding on the mission of Rama. Ah, how lucky is he! He has the strength and intelligence necessary to win victory in that mission of Rama. He is indeed the foremost among the devotees of Rama.” The sea

was boisterous with the joy it felt at the sight of Hanuman going over and across. (*RKRV Part II p. 111-122*)

When Hanuman was speeding along the sky like an arrow from Rama's bow, many temptations attempted to halt him. He did not delay or turn back. (*SSS Vol.4 p.3*)

The Mainaka Peak, which was submerged in the sea, rose over the waters, for he wished to serve the person who was engaged in the service of the Lord. He said, "Oh Son of the Wind-God! It will be exhausting for you to cover the full distance in one leap, please take rest for a while on my head and confer on me the good fortune of having a share in the service you are devoted to." (*RKRV Part II p.122*)

Master's task brooked no delay:

When the Mainaka Mountain rose up to offer him a little rest, he (Hanuman) trampled it down into depths of the sea. The mountain rose again and pleaded for the chance of serving him for a while. It had decked itself with green orchards and fragrant gardens for his recreation and recoupment, for when Indra slashed off the wings of all mountains in past ages, Mainaka had fled with the help of Vayu, the father of Hanuman, and he wanted to express his gratitude by granting hospitality to the son; but, Hanuman pleaded that master's task brooked no delay. (*SSS Vol.4 p.3*)

Hanuman gave ear to the prayer of Mainaka, but did not halt. He touched the peak as a token of halting and sped on. He bowed to the hospitable peak in gratitude, "Mainaka! I am going on

Rama's errand. Till I fulfil it, I can have no thought of rest or even food and drink. It is not proper for me to stay awhile on the way," he said. A little further on, a Serpent-demon called Surasa and an Ogress named Simhika obstructed his passage, but Hanuman overcame them *by skilful tactics and avoided further delay*⁷ and reached the Lanka shore.

Hanuman in Lanka:

There, splendid in the sunlight, he found many gardens and parks as well as pleasure centres which made Hanuman forget where he was. He was amazed at the variety of multi-coloured birds that fluttered to and fro in clusters within the parks. Hanuman climbed onto a charming mound that was nearby and thought within himself, "This success is not due to my skill or strength. It is entirely due to the Grace and Blessings of Rama only." Seeing the uniquely grand houses, the long wide streets, the attractive gardens, etc., in that City, Hanuman was moved with wonder and doubt—doubt whether it was a replica of Heaven itself. Wherever one cast his eye, one saw well-built Rakshasa soldiers parading the streets, Rakshasa women, famed for their skill and powers to assume whatever form they wanted were found by Hanuman indulging in licentious sports. Deva, Naga, Gandharva and human damsels enslaved by Ravana were pining and wailing in the palaces, awaiting the day of release. Hanuman concluded that it would not be wise to move about in his native form among the vast crowds that filled the streets. He assumed a subtle imperceptible form and entered the City.

⁷ SSS Vol.4 p.3

Hanuman’s encounter with Lankini, the Guardian of the gate of Lanka:

There was at the very entrance gate of Lanka, a demoness, named Lankini, placed there on purpose to prevent any foreigner, whatever his intentions may be, from entering the City. She saw the strange figure of Hanuman, venturing to enter and accosted him in a threatening manner. “Who goes there? Where do you come from? Who are you? We have never before seen such a creature in this region. You could not have come from outside the bounds of Lanka, for Lanka is surrounded by the sea. Ah! did you, by any means, come across the sea? How can you avoid me and enter the City? Halt! Stop where you are!” Hanuman paid no attention to her vapourings. He moved forward, dragging his tail behind him as if he had not heard her threats. Lankini became even more furious and ferocious. She roared in anger, “Oh, ill-fated fool! Do not my words fall on your ears?” Hanuman brushed aside her protests and questions. He walked towards the gate, with a smile on his face. Lankini shouted, “Ugly beast! Whoever goes against my orders will be eaten up. Remember, I will chew your bones in seconds. Be warned.” She rushed forward to catch the tiny monkey that Hanuman had become, while he sought to enter Lanka City. When she came right in front of him, Hanuman tightened his little fist and hit her with a mighty blow. She rolled unconscious on the ground. Blood flowed in streams from her mouth. She recovered after a while and rushed madly forward to catch hold of Hanuman. But when Hanuman dealt another blow, she could not bear the impact. She fell and could not rise again. But she managed to sit up after great struggle, and with folded palms, she supplicated, “Oh Person of wonderful Form! Long ago, when Brahma, the first of

the Trinity, was turning away from Ravana, after granting him many boons, he faced him all of a sudden and said, ‘The day your Guardian of the Gate is fatally hurt by a blow from a monkey’s hand, and know that your downfall begins. Your powers can no longer help you. Be warned by that incident that death is drawing near. That monkey will enter Lanka at the command of God for fulfilling His Mission. His arrival heralds the destruction of the Rakshasas. Be conscious of this.’ You are the messenger indicated. How fortunate that my body was sanctified by contact with your sacred hand! Ah! How soft and thrilling was the blow you gave me.” Saying thus, she fondled the spot where Hanuman had hit her. (*RKR Part II p.123-124*)

Further she said, “Hanuman! Your touch has sanctified me.”

*Darshanam Papa nashanam, Sparshanam karma
Vimochanam, Sambhaashanam sankata nashanam.*

(The vision destroys all sins, the touch frees a person from consequence of all actions and conversation eliminates all troubles.) “It is time for me to leave my body” saying so she breathed her last. (*SSB 2002 p.81-82*)

Hanuman meets Vibhishana:

Meanwhile, paying no heed to her words, unmoved by praise and unconcerned with blame, Hanuman entered Lanka, repeating “Rama” “Rama” “Rama” with every breath. Still a thought tormented him. Who would give him the clue about where Sita was? How to identify Sita when one sees her? He adopted a subtle form to escape notice and moved from one treetop to

another. He roamed in the bazaars and among groups of Rakshasas, unknown to anyone. Suddenly, his eyes fell upon a building that seemed a temple of Hari (Vishnu, whose Avatar Rama was). It had a garden of Tulsi plants all around it. Over the entrance door, the name Hari was carved beautifully. The house was undoubtedly a Temple of God Vishnu. Hanuman was surprised. “How came the name of Hari over this door?” he wondered, “Surely, this is a holy spot,” he decided.

The curiosity of Hanuman was awakened. He jumped on to the roof of that place and peeped through the window to find out what exactly was happening. Just at that moment, a person was stretching his limbs prior to rising from bed, pronouncing the Name of Hari. When that fell on his ears, Hanuman was extremely delighted. He was also emboldened when he knew that even in Lanka there were people reciting the name of Hari. So he felt like searching for Sita with greater courage and less apprehension. “The man of this house appears to be devout and good. Perhaps he may be able to tell me the whereabouts of Sita. He might be persuaded to befriend me since we are both loyal to the self-same Form of God.” With this idea, Hanuman changed himself into a priest of the Brahmin caste, and made his entrance into that house. Though for a moment he had some doubt regarding the stranger, Vibhishana, the owner of the house, decided that, whoever he is, he surely must be honoured since he was a Brahmin. So he came forward and prostrated before Hanuman, “Master! Which is your native place? Where are you coming from? How could you avoid being noticed and harassed by the Rakshasas in the streets?” Vibhishana asked. He described to his guest the horrors indulged in by the Rakshasas and

extolled the audacity and fearlessness of Hanuman. Hanuman replied, “I am a servant of Hari. My name is Hanuman. I have come because Rama sent me,” and he spoke thereafter of the virtues and excellences of Rama in some detail. Hanuman noticed that while he was describing Rama, tears rolled down the cheeks of Vibhishana, “Oh, what a happy day! How great is my fortune! As soon as I rose from bed, I could hear today these glorious words which bring peace and joy,” thought Vibhishana to himself.

Hanuman interpreted these incidents as the Grace of Rama. He was wonder struck that in Lanka, the Land of Fear, there could be one such person soaked in Hari. He asked him, “Sir, how is it that you live without fear in this vile atmosphere?” Vibhishana⁸ replied, “It is due to the Grace of God. ...Does not the tongue move about incessantly in the cavity of the mouth where teeth with sharp edges surround it? Who helps it to escape being bitten? So too, I am living here. Enough about me. Tell me on what task you have been sent here.” Hanuman realized that he was a good man and that association with such men would without doubt yield good results. Before answering the queries of Vibhishana, he repeated the Name many times in joyful gratitude, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, and prayed for permission to disclose his mission to the pious pure-minded Vibhishana. He felt it would not be correct to hide things from him. As a preliminary, he asked, “Sir, what is your name? What are you doing in this Lanka?” Touched by the humility and good

⁸ See Chapter, *Vibhishana - Vibhishana's Interaction with Hanuman*:

manners of Hanuman, Vibhishana replied, “Sir, I am an unfortunate person, the brother of Ravana. My name is Vibhishana. I am in a pathetic fix, for I am unable to recite the Name of Hari, to my heart’s content.” Hearing this Hanuman felt he had his answer. He performed one high skip in joy and said, “I am a Messenger of Rama. I have come in search of Sita.” In an instant, Vibhishana fell at the feet of Hanuman and asked, “Sir, where is my Rama now? I am yearning long to see Him...Can I have the chance to have His Darshan?Will I be blessed by Rama?” Listening to his appeal, the heart of Hanuman melted in sympathy. *(RKRV Part II p.125-128)*

Hanuman consoled Vibhishana a great deal. He said, “Vibhishana, Rama heeds only the heart. He will not be affected by family affiliations, religious affinities, or Sadhana attainments. He is pleased best by feelings and their purity. He will bless you for the loftiness of your ideals and the cleanliness of your daily life. He will grant you the Darshan you are yearning for; do not grieve. Why, you can take me as the best proof for what I am saying about His compassion and grace. I am a monkey. Waywardness is the hallmark of my tribe. The word ‘monkey’ has become a byword for a prankish, playful, petty mind. I am not versed at all in the Sastras. As for asceticism, I have no idea what it means. I have not repeated, according to prescribed rules, the Name of God, nor have I gone on pilgrimages seeking holy rivers! How then has Rama blessed me? Because He heeds only the love which animates and the feelings that activate people. In your case also, He will pay attention only to the Purity of Feelings. Be confident. Do not doubt.” *(RKRV Part II p.124-128)*

Example of the tongue:

Then Hanuman said to Vibhishana, “Oh Vibhishana, the good people in this world are harassed by the wicked demons, who are like the sharp teeth that surround a tongue. But mark one thing. The tongue was born along with you, while the teeth came in the middle and will fall away in the middle. But the tongue which was born with you will last until your death⁹.” The tongue is a sacred organ. It is virtuous too. It is an embodiment of sweetness and truth though surrounded by the vile, the vicious and the wicked. The teeth do not allow the tongue to come out but in times of necessity it comes out and helps. When the lips run dry, the tongue comes out and moistens the lips. (*SSB 1996 p.71*)

Hanuman teaches the Meaning of Devotion to Vibhishana:

When Hanuman entered Lanka he noticed Vibhishana. Vibhishana told Hanuman: “Hanuman! I am living in the midst of the wicked Rakshasa like the tongue surrounded by sharp teeth, How long am I to live like this? How will I secure the grace of Rama? When will I be blessed with the bliss of being in His Divine presence? I have long been waiting for that great moment.” Vibhishana lamented in this manner. Hanuman gave a significant message to Vibhishana then, "Vibhishana! Do not think that you are alone in being subject to these ordeals. There are many great souls who experience similar troubles. The Rakshasas constantly harass the Sages, the *Avatars* and all good men. However, take note of one fact. The tongue came first and

⁹ “My dear Vibhishana! Do not be worried on that account. In old age, the teeth fall away but tongue remains intact. Likewise the demons will be destroyed in due course like the teeth, and you will remain sage like the tongue. So be happy.” (*SSB 1990 p.113*)

the teeth emerged later. The teeth which emerged in the middle drop away in due course! Likewise these Rakshasas also will fall away soon. Do not have any doubt on this score.

Hanuman then went on: "Vibhishana! You have been attracted to the Lotus Feet of Rama. Cling to them firmly. Either He should bless you because of your perseverance, or you should merge in Him in course of time. There is no other way. It is wrong to give up the Lord in the middle. This is not the mark of a true devotee. What is devotion? It is not mere repetition of Rama's name endlessly. While contemplating on Rama, you must take part in service to Rama." (*SSS Vol.29 p.145-146*)

Hanuman told Vibhishana that it was not enough to merely chant the name. One should also engage himself in the service of the Divine. Hanuman declared that while meditating on the name of Rama, he was also engaged in constant service to the Lord. That was how he had earned Rama's grace and become near and dear to Him. (*SSB 1990 p.113*)

Relieved by these words, Vibhishana informed Hanuman details of how Sita was brought to Lanka. Hanuman refused to partake of any food or drink, since he had resolved to refrain from both until he could see Sita and communicate to her the message of Rama. He was eager to renew the search without delay. But Vibhishana advised him to proceed cautiously and slowly, and inform himself of the strength and weakness of Ravana's Empire before he left. He himself acquainted him with these points in some detail. Thereafter, he permitted Hanuman to leave on his errand. Hanuman was so delighted to learn that Sita was in

Lanka that he actually forgot to ask where she actually was!
(RKRV Part II p.127-128)

Hanuman searches for Sita:

He entered many mansions to find out whether she was anywhere therein. He saw bebies of women, fallen on their beds, intoxicated by drink and dance and floored by the banalities of luxury. Keeping in mind the characteristics and excellences of Sita that Rama had described to him, he observed closely every woman in those houses; but he could not find Sita. *(RKRV Part II p.129)*

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. Their actions were most grotesque. Hanuman scolded himself. “Alas! What a sin I am committing! Are these scenes I am expected to see? These eyes must see the Divine form of Lord Rama and not such ugly scenes. Yet, I am forced to do so if I must succeed in finding Sita. I must not allow these situations to upset me.” So strengthening his resolve, Hanuman climbed over the walls of the inner chambers and continued his search. *(SSB 2002 p.117)*

He even looked into the bed chamber of Ravana, to find if Sita was held a prisoner there. Though, he moved in the bedrooms of the people in Lanka, his mind never wavered. He found women sleeping in all sorts of postures and positions, but, never did an evil thought enter the mind of Hanuman. At one place, he found

an extremely beautiful woman, sleeping in the bedchamber of Ravana. For a moment he thought that she might be Sita, for she was extremely beautiful. Immediately he regretted for having had such a thought. He knew for certain that she would never agree to occupy the bedchamber of evil Ravana. (*SSB 1996 p.56-57*)

These eyes must see the Divine form of Lord Rama and not such ugly scenes. Yet, I am forced to do so if I must succeed in finding Sita. I must not allow these situations to upset me.” So strengthening his resolve, Hanuman climbed over the walls of the inner chambers and continued his search. (*SSB 2002 p.117*)

Hanuman then made a thorough search of Lanka to trace out Sita, but he failed. Deeply frustrated, he climbed to the top of a tree on the sea shore and he desired to commit suicide by plunging into the sea. The very thought that he was not able to perform the task assigned by Rama gnawed deeply at his heart. (*SSB 1996 p.57*)

In near despair, he jumped on a peak of a hill and thought over the situation, deeply, for long. “How can I go back to Rama, without completing my mission, meeting Sita and consoling her? Better far to drown in the sea yonder. Alas, mine is a wasted life. Fie upon it,” he said to himself. (*RKR V Part II p.129*)

Hanuman sees Sita:

That very instant, he saw a beautiful garden, trim and green, shining in the distance. Coming down the peak, he realised that since the garden was in a valley surrounded by tall mansions, he

could not discover the place from the ground. Not knowing what to do next, he hied fast to the house of Vibhishana and discovered him immersed in reciting the Name of Rama. Seeing Hanuman, Vibhishana rose and approached him in a friendly and pleasing manner. He asked, “Hanuman! Did you see Sita?” Hanuman expressed his disappointment, but Vibhishana gave him the information. “Hanuman there is in this City a garden named Ashokavana. There, in the midst of terrible and mighty Rakshasas, Sita is kept. My wife and daughter are with her, doing service.” He also disclosed to him the route by which he could reach the garden and the spot. Hanuman could not stay a moment longer. He reached the garden in a trice. Those who saw him began shouting and accosting, for his figure was strange and peculiar to them. Noticing this, Hanuman felt that his figure was making him too prominent and public, and so he assumed a diminutive size. Jumping unnoticed from branch to branch, hiding himself behind clusters of leaves, he reached the Ashokavana.

There he saw a *forlorn form of*¹⁰ woman, sitting under a tree, weak and worn, through want of food and sleep. The fierce Rakshasas sitting guard around her were threatening her, to change her will and to break her determination. Meanwhile, a grand cavalcade neared the place heralded by the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets. Behind them Hanuman could see a royal personage, bejewelled and be-robed in magnificent style. Hundreds of maidens followed him, carrying plates full of jewels, sweet and fragrant presents and soft silks.

¹⁰ *SSB 2002 p.118*

Ensnoring himself within the green shade of leaves, Hanuman watched the scene from the top of a nearby tree. It was Ravana, evidently, for he pleaded before Sita and prayed to her that she might offer her love to him. He tried to extract a promise by threats of cruel punishment. Hanuman heard him exhort those around him to inflict pain and injury on her. That frail feeble woman did not raise her eyes towards Ravana even once during the entire tirade. She only said, “Fool! Vile vicious fellow! Rama alone has rights over me. No one other than Rama has any. I shall reduce this body to ashes in the flames of sorrow at separation from Him. I shall never stray from my resolve. Believe in this and beware!” Hanuman heard these emphatic words and realised that the woman was Sita¹¹ and no other. His mind gained peace and calmness when he knew this. (*RKR* Part II p.129-131)

Her sorrow was obvious. Hanuman climbed the tree under which she sat and started singing the glory of Dasaratha’s son from the beginning. Sita¹² 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

¹¹ See Chapter, *Sita - Ravana, the trickster*

¹² See Chapter, *Sita - Hanuman sees Sita*



Figure 2: Hanuman sees the forlorn form of Sita

Source of the Painting:

Painting by Sri K V Bhima Rao exclusively for this book

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 identity¹³.” (*SSB 2002 p.118-119*)

He dropped right before Sita the ring that was given by Rama. It fell shining like a flame of purest ray. And he kept on repeating “Rama! Rama” in ecstatic bliss. When her eyes fell upon the ring, Sita was astonished at what she saw. “.... She took it and placed it on her eyes in reverence. Tears of gratitude flowed from her eyes. “Rama! Are you granting me your Darshan, the joy of your presence through this ring?” she said and raised her head.

In a flash, she remembered the incidents in Trijata’s (*A Rakshasa named Trijata was one of the warders of Sita. She was deeply attached to the Lotus Feet of Rama*) dream¹⁴ as related by her. She could not keep her joyful excitement down. Sita, who had not talked to any stranger for long, looked at the monkey-form and addressed it thus: “Oh monkey! Who are you? Wherefrom is this ring¹⁵?” She could not put full trust in the monkey, for; she had been deceived for months by tricks of impersonation. She interrogated the monkey in various ways in order to verify his

¹³ To impress upon Sita that he was indeed the messenger of Rama, Hanuman then ripped open his heart to show Rama installed there. Looking at the image of Rama imprinted on the heart of Hanuman, Sita fainted. Hanuman then became completely certain that the lady was indeed Sita. (*SSB 1996 p.77-78*)

¹⁴ See Chapter, *Sita – Trijata’s dream*
See also Chapter, *Vibhishana - Trijata’s Dream*

¹⁵ Sita told Hanuman, “Did Rama Himself give you this ring? This was a gift to my Lord from King Janaka at the time of my wedding.” (*SSB 2002 p.119*)

credentials. Off and on, she would ask the monkey about the welfare of Rama and at the very thought of His being alone, in the forest, tears would flow profusely from her eyes. Sita swung alternately between joy and grief. Hanuman watched her plight. He could not keep away from her the bond of love and loyalty that was holding him onto Rama. He related the dynastic story of Rama and His exploits, as well as his own story until he met Rama. When she listened to that story, she felt as happy as when Rama stood before her. She could picture Rama standing beside her at Ayodhya and in the forest retreats. She felt so thrilled that she forgot herself and her condition. (*RVRK Part 11 p.132-133*)

Soon, she recovered consciousness and knew where she was. She said, “Oh Monkey! I am glad you told me all this, but let me ask one question: “How were you able to enter this heavily guarded city, in spite of your being only a weak little monkey? How could you escape being caught by these Rakshasas and succeed in spotting out this place and coming to me?” Hanuman replied, “Mother! What skill and strength have I? I am the servant of Rama, His slave. He makes me do everything He wants or likes. Without Him, I cannot survive even a moment. I am a doll in His hands. I play as He pulls the strings. I have no will of my own.” Then, Hanuman elaborated on the glory of Rama and manifested his devotion and dedication in the most impressive manner. It was most thrilling to hear those words of his.

Rama had told Hanuman, for communication to Sita, some incidents which no one else knew. He had said, “It may so happen that Sita may not believe your words. She may doubt your genuineness. Then, you can remind her of these events,

which are known only to her and me.” So, Hanuman began relating those special incidents. “Mother Sita, He has asked me to tell you of the attempts made by the wicked Crow¹⁶ to cause injury to you and of His attempt to save you and to kill that demon.” At this, Sita wept aloud, saying, “Hanuman! Why is Rama who was so kind to me then delaying to release me from this torture? Rama is the ocean of mercy. Yes, but why has He become so hard-hearted at my fate? No! No! I am wrong. Rama is the embodiment of compassion. He has to play a role that involves all this apparent hardheartedness that is all. Hanuman! You are no ordinary individual. For, Rama will not associate Himself so closely with ordinary individuals. Nor will He send His ring with inferior persons. How fortunate you are to be His messenger! Show me once your full stature and form.”

Then, Hanuman landed on the ground and stood before Sita with palms folded in adoration. When Sita saw him growing into a huge and terror-inducing size, she half suspected it to be some demonic trick. She closed her eyes and turned aside! Realising her fear and the suspicion that was at the basis of that fear, Hanuman said, “Mother! I am neither Ravana nor any one of his devilish Rakshasas. I am the faithful servant of Rama with the pure sacred body of unequalled splendour. He is the very breath of my existence, believe me. I am speaking the Truth. Guessing that you may not have faith in my being His authentic messenger, He took off His finger this golden ring and placed it in my hands to be given to you. With me, there came Jambavan,

¹⁶ Under section *Rama*, See Chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita - Jayantha*

Nila, Angada and thousands of others of extraordinary heroism. But I alone was able to cross the ocean through the Grace of Rama. The others are all on the other shore. We were able to hear from Jatayu and Sabari the story of your having been brought here by this villainous Rakshasa King. When we came to know, three days ago, from Sampathi news confirming your being here, we felt as happy as when seeing you before our eyes. Rama and Lakshmana are awaiting my return with the good tidings. If you permit me, I shall get back immediately and communicate to them news about your welfare.”

Sita pleaded, “Hanuman! I do not know whether you will be back at this place or when. Please stay for a day more and delight me, by telling me about Rama and Lakshmana.” But since the demonesses gathered around in groups to carry out their separate assignments, Hanuman resumed his miniature size and hopped onto a branch of the tree.

Her pathetic condition hurt the kind heart of Hanuman. She appeared to him as the very picture of misery. Hanuman heard the harsh and sharp pointed words used by the women-guards, and he gnashed his teeth in anger, for he could not deal with them as he wished to. Sita alone could give him orders what to do.

Hanuman pleads with Sita to come with him to Rama sitting on his back:

Hanuman was watching for an opportunity to see Sita while alone and very soon he got it. Hanuman jumped to the ground and whispered to Sita, “Mother! Do not be anxious and grief-stricken. Sit on my back, and I will transport you in a trice to

where Rama and Lakshmana are awaiting news about you.” Hanuman pleaded in many ways for acceptance of this plan. Sita replied, “Hanuman, I am indeed very glad to hear you speak thus. I am sunk and struggling in the sorrow of separation. Your sweet words give me solace like a boat on a stormy sea. But do you not know that I will never contact a person other than my Lord? How then can I sit on your back, consider that.” These words of Sita were a sharp repartee which hit Hanuman in the heart and exposed his pettiness and pride for having suggested a dishonourable step. But Hanuman recovered soon and said, “Mother! Am I not your son? What is wrong when the son carries the mother on his back? What evil consequence can follow from that?” He supported his idea with various pleadings and points.

Sita refuses to return on the back of Hanuman saying that one has to keep the dharma of pathivratha

In reply, Sita declared, “Hanuman! Of course, for me and for you, the feelings of mother and son are real; but, imagine what the world will think of it. We have to consider that aspect also, haven’t we? We must so live that we are ideals for the lives of others. We should not draw upon ourselves by our acts the ridicule, contempt or condemnation of others. No one should point the finger of scorn at us. Above all, we must derive self-satisfaction, as a result of our acts. When I know I cannot derive that satisfaction I will never attempt such acts. Even if my life departs, I don’t need or crave for another’s assistance. *(RKR V Part II p. 134-138)*

Sita smiled and said, “Hanuman¹⁷, “If you carry me back now, you will be repeating the act for which we now condemn Ravana”. The means are as important as the goal; the end does not justify the means; it has to be as noble as the end. (SSS Vol.4 p274)

“Besides, it will detract the glory that awaits my Lord, who will certainly liberate me by the prowess of his arm.¹⁸ Moreover, my Rama has to destroy this vile demon who tortures me. He is the person who has to discharge the responsibility, no one else can. He must come himself into this Lanka, kill this Ravana, and lead this Sita back holding her in His hand—that is the sign of the true hero that He is. That is the sign of genuine valour. Look at this Ravana. He 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. When news spreads that Rama sent a monkey and brought away Sita without the knowledge of Ravana, it would be dishonouring him. Getting out of here in the way you suggest will surely be treason. We should not resort to mean stratagems. We should guard the fair name of Rama as our very breath. Your proposal has not given me satisfaction for this reason.”

Hanuman admires her virtues and seeks pardon

Hanuman admired her untarnishable virtue and her steadfast adoration of her Lord, and the loftiness of the ideals she maintained. He extolled her in his mind and recollected her

¹⁷ *SSB 2002 p.119*

¹⁸ *SSS Vol.4 p.274*

words, in order to draw inspiration there from. He said, “Mother, pardon me. Since I saw with my own eyes the tortures you are undergoing and the pangs of separation which Rama is suffering, I entertained this idea to take you as quickly as possible to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Pardon me if it was wrong,” and fell at her feet, again and again, in great remorse. At this, Sita questioned him many times on the condition of Rama and Lakshmana and how they were faring in the forest.

Hanuman gives the welfare of Rama and Lakshmana:

“Why worry about men? They can bear any burden or travail. They can bear separation from women with fortitude. Women suffer most, for it is terror for the wives to live apart from their husbands.” Hanuman told her, “Mother, Rama and Lakshmana are keeping well, of course; but, do not compare them with ordinary males. It is not fair. Alas, every moment, Rama is spending in thoughts of you and of separation from you; and so, He is not paying heed to either thirst or hunger. He does not eat or drink, unless pressed lovingly by Lakshmana to partake of a few fruits or a little drink. I do not remember a single occasion on which Rama drank a gulp of water on His own initiative. Do not be under the impression that they have forgotten you or are neglecting you. “Lakshmana is spending his days watching over Rama as the lids guard the eye. He is the breath of the Breath of Rama. He is overcome by the agony of separation from you and of witnessing the anguish of his brother. He has become a rock, unaffected by any feeling other than concern for Rama. He is the source of courage and sustenance that is unflinching and full. He has not slept these ten months, nor has he taken food.”

When Hanuman was describing the pathetic condition of the brothers, Sita acted as if she was amazed at the love and affection that Rama had towards her. She pretended not to believe all that Hanuman related to her. She watched Hanuman and appreciated his wisdom and powers. She recalled the story of how Rama and Hanuman had met and came to be bound in love and loyalty, and derived great joy and content therefrom. At last, she got firm faith in Hanuman and his mission. Again and again, Hanuman pleaded, “Mother! Why this feeling of separateness? Why spend days and months in agony and pain? Please sit on my back and I shall take you in a trice into the Presence of Rama.” Sita noted the anxiety of Hanuman to win his point in spite of her arguments, moral and spiritual, legal and worldly. She decided therefore to stop further conversation on this score by a sharp repartee. She said, “Hanuman! Are you or are you not one who obeys strictly the commands of Rama?” Hanuman replied, “Yes, I would rather give up my life than go against the commands of Rama or disobey His orders.” He banged his chest with his fist in order to lend emphasis to his declaration. “Well, consider this. Did Rama command you to seek me out and bring him information about where I am after seeing me, or, did He ask you to bring me with you?” Hanuman was rendered dumb by this question. He could not continue his pleadings. He said, “Mother! I did not think so deep into the consequences of my proposal. I ask pardon again.” From that moment, he never broached that matter. (*RKR V Part II p.138-141*)

Sita gives permission for Hanuman to leave:

Hanuman knew that it was wrong to spend any more time in Lanka. He felt that the sooner he communicated to Rama the

welcome news about Sita the better for all concerned. He prayed for permission to leave. (*RKRV Part II p.143*)

With great reluctance and grief, she gave permission for Hanuman to leave¹⁹. She said, “Go, go safe and soon. Tell Rama to come soon and take me with Him.” She shed tears of hope and sorrow. Hanuman was moved by the pathos of the scene. Sadness overwhelmed his brave heart. He consoled her and said, “Very soon, Mother, Rama will lay siege to this Lanka, with His Vanara hordes, He will destroy these Rakshasa forces, rescue you and restore you to Ayodhya.”

But Sita was inconsolable. She had her doubts. “Hanuman, what is it that you say! Can monkey hordes fight against and destroy these Rakshasas who have mastered many a mysterious stratagem and subterfuge, and who are themselves much stronger?Sita was lamenting thus, while Hanuman interrupted her and said, “Mother! Do not weep. We of the monkey hordes are the bond slaves of Rama. All of us believe that Rama is our strength and our courage. We take in as our very breath the name, Rama. We have no other source of life. Therefore, even if each of these Rakshasas increases a thousand-fold in devilry, we monkeys can easily destroy them. We can win victory over them in spite of their wiles and wickedness. You are doubting the extent of our strength and skills, since we appear in our wonted forms. Let me show the Form I can assume in battle.” Hanuman rose sky-high, and stood before Sita—a

¹⁹ *SSB 2002 p.120*

mountain-peak of shining Gold. Sita was astonished at this. She said, “Hanuman! Stop. Stop. Enough. Limit yourself. If the eyes of the Rakshasas fall on you, you may not be able to return soon to Rama.” Sita protested and pleaded with him to assume his old form. Hanuman gave up the terrible form he had converted himself into, and became a quiet little monkey in no time. Hanuman fell at the feet of Sita and turned his steps away. But the plight of Sita and her anguished face were so deeply imprinted on his heart that his feet would not move away.

LANKA ON FIRE:

Hanuman decides to teach the demons a lesson and proceeds to lay to utter waste, the beautiful *Asoka* gardens²⁰. He was finally captured and brought before Ravana:

While returning from the place where Sita was, he saw an orchard and plucking some tasty fruits, he ate his fill. He cast aside those that were unripe and the extra ones he had plucked. Sighting this, a Rakshasa guard wanted to frighten him away but Hanuman gave him a blow which felled him to the ground. He ran to the head of the gang of guards. He fled in terror to his

²⁰ Tulsi Das, while composing his epic poem, Ramacharitramanas, wrote that the flowers in the gardens of Lanka were white. Hanuman, who was present unseen, manifested himself, his face full of dissent, for he said that they were red and not white, as he had himself seem them. Tulsi Das refused to amend the adjective, but Hanuman insisted that the error be corrected. The argument almost turned into a scuffle, and Rama Himself had to intervene. He told Hanuman that since anger against *rakshasas* had reddened his eyes, the white flowers appeared red to him. (SSS Vol.10 p.114) (SSS Vol.13 p.213)

superior in office and he in turn approached his master. Thus, the news of a monkey rioting in the garden reached the Imperial ears of Ravana himself. It struck Ravana as an evil omen. He could not restrain his anger at the mischief and the insult. The flames of his ire rose to the skies. He ordered a few hundred Rakshasas to overwhelm and catch the audacious animal. Since they could not succeed in their mission, he sent a few thousand trained and heavily armed Soldier-Rakshasas into the garden where Hanuman was awaiting their onslaught. Even that formidable force could not harm the monkey or persuade him to move off. Hanuman broke a dry twig from the tree on which he sat and with that tiny weapon which he waved around to the recital of Ram, Ram, he warded off every missile that was directed at him. Seeing this, the Rakshasas wondered who he was. Was he an emissary of the Gods? Or, was he the harbinger of the destruction of Lanka? The defeated heroes returned to camp, burdened with premonitions of disaster. They had no courage left to report their discomfiture to their ruler, Ravana. “You sent on this expedition countless Rakshasas selected for this special assignment, but we could not achieve the object. When the monkey roared once, hundreds of our men died for sheer fear. The earth shook under our feet. That roar echoed and re-echoed from every mansion in the city. Seeing our plight, our leaders decided to come to you and report that this is no ordinary foe, and that this presages some evil calamity.” This was the statement they made before Ravana. He was told the plain fact, without any reservation. If the monkey was allowed to roam about, danger was certain to envelope the land.

Hanuman bows to Brahmastra released by Meghanada and taken before Ravana:

At this, Ravana sent his own dear son, Akshayakumara, at the head of thousands of seasoned Warrior-Rakshasas. But Hanuman slaughtered this host in a trice, and Ravana had to mourn the death of his beloved son. The entire land shivered in fear at the news of the death of the Prince and the decimation of his army. People whispered in fear, that this was no ordinary monkey, that it must be a Divine Phenomenon, and that it was the terrible avenger for the sin of bringing Sita over to Lanka. Many prayed to Sita in their heart of hearts to deliver Lanka from the monkey, for they feared it was her vengeance that had taken shape as that strange beast. Ravana sent word for Meghanada, and commissioned him to destroy this new invader. He placed at his disposal a huge army of several thousands. Meghanada ascended his chariot and led the heroic army in great pomp. As they marched along, earth and sky were astounded at their might and their angry tread. Their war cry rent the heavens. All who witnessed that pageantry and panoply were struck with wonder and admiration.

Hanuman watched their march and heard their trumpeting with absolute unconcern. He sat unmoved, on a little branch of the spreading tree, and enjoyed the antics of the Rakshasas until they drew near. The soldiers rained arrows on Hanuman from all sides. With one ear-splitting roar, Hanuman jumped down and plucking a giant tree by its roots, he waved it round, beating off the rain of arrows that tried to reach him. The arrows were swept off so fast that when they hit back the Rakshasas who shot them, the impact killed them in such large numbers that very few were

left to carry on the fight. Meghanada was felled by a blow. He rolled, spouting blood. So, he resolved to resort to the sacred arrow of Brahma that he had with him. He knew that Brahma, the first of the Trinity, had told Ravana that he would meet his death at the hands of man and monkey. He decided to prevent that calamity. The Brahmaastra was released with appropriate ritual formulae. Hanuman had great reverence for the weapon that is sanctified by such Manthras and dedicated to Brahma. So, he did not counteract it. He reverentially prostrated before it. So, it was easy for Meghanada to bind him with the Serpent Rope.

Interesting Conversation between Ravana and Hanuman²¹:

The happy news was immediately carried to Ravana by the exultant Rakshasas. Lakhs of eager faces crowded the streets to see the monkey that had been bound. Hanuman was unaffected by fear or anxiety. He moved calm and collected watching the crowds with an amused smile. At last, he reached the Audience Hall of Ravana. The courtiers and ministers assembled there were aghast at the insulting indifference shown by Hanuman to the display of power and luxury that the Hall contained. Ravana laughed aloud at the absurd figure of the monkey; but the next moment, he was overcome by fear of impending death. However, anger was the overriding emotion at that time in him. He asked, “Hey, you monkey! Who are you really? Whose is the might that you have been exhibiting and using? Why did you destroy this orchard and this park? Though bound, you have no sense of

²¹ See Chapter, *Ravana - Conversation between Ravana and Hanuman*:

shame. You look around with your head high up. Come, give me the right answers.”

Hanuman had a hearty laugh at his interrogator. He used for his replies a style of speech and a vocabulary which were beyond the understanding of the people who stood around him. But Ravana, who was an expert in rhetoric and grammar, understood him quite well and the dialogue between them appeared to the listeners like a disputation between two intellectual giants. Ravana demonstrated before Hanuman several magic feats in order to impress him with his invincibility. He manifested many powers and feats. But Hanuman remained unmoved. He said, “Ravana, I know your prowess. I have heard that you fight with a thousand arms. I am aware also of your famous fight with Vali. But what wrong have I done? I was hungry. I plucked a few trees by their roots. It is my nature. I was in my element, my natural habitat, the tree top. Of course, each one has the desire and the determination to safeguard his own life, to protect his own body. Your soldiers are awfully wicked. They hurt me. So, I hurt them, and unable to bear the hurt, they died. I fought with them in order to save myself. The arrow of your son forced me to enter into his bondage. But I am not trying to deceive you in return. My only desire is to carry out the orders of my Master. Listen to me carefully. Give up all sense of personal pride and reputation. Reflect on the grandeur of your clan, the family to which you belong. Remember, you are the great-grandson of Brahma. You are the grandson of the great Pulastya. You are the son of Visravas. Give up this delusion of accumulating pomp and power; adore in your heart the 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! Surrender to Him, take refuge in Him. Even Time shivers in fear before Him. It is not good for you to harbour enmity towards Him. Listen to me. Place Sita at the Lotus Feet of Rama, and meditate on the Grace that flows from those Feet. Strengthened by that Grace, Rule over the state of Lanka for ever and ever. Make the glory of your grandfather, Pulastya, reach the far corners of the world, without blemish, so long as the sun and moon illumine the sky. The fair name of your line should not be tarnished by you in the least. Give up your pride and your delusion. Oh, Emperor! Rivers taking birth on mountain ranges get flooded in the rainy season and roll furiously along. Within weeks, they run dry with just a trickle of water. Your power and wealth will soon dry up and vanish. Adore Rama as the source of power and wealth. Then, they would never get dry; for He is the inexhaustible spring of peace and prosperity. He is ever full. He won't lose, but you will benefit from Him. Oh Ravana! I am telling you with nothing held back, with an open mind. No one can rescue the unfortunate person who is blinded by hatred towards Him. Accept my advice.” (*RKRV Part II p.143-150*)

Hanuman asks Ravana to realise the wrong in imprisoning the Mother of Creation:

Hanuman undertook to tell Ravana what good qualities are and how one should strive to have good qualities. He addressed Ravana and he asked him to realize at least then that what he had done was wrong. He told Ravana that in bringing Sita, he brought mother of creation herself into Lanka and kept her imprisoned in Lanka. He threatened to destroy the whole Lanka and teach Ravana a lesson. (*SSB 1977 p.106*)

These words of Hanuman were soft and salutary. They were full of wisdom and morality. But Ravana was not prepared to benefit by the counsel. He said, “Fool! Dare you advise me what to do? Fie on you, fie! Death has drawn near you; or else, you would not have the courage to lecture thus so long in my presence. Enough of your prating; keep your mouth shut!” Hanuman did not obey. He retorted “Ravana! These words of yours spell your doom. Alas, you have become insane. You will know the truth of my diagnosis as time passes. In a few days you can know to whom Death is drawing near, to you or to me!” (*RKRV Part II p.150*)

*Buddhi Cheppeda Ravana, Ee lanka neekinka ledura durguna
Buddhi Cheppeda Vinumu Neevika Saddu Cheyaka Naadu
Palukulu
Buddhiki Yochinchaka Chaavuku Baddhudavaitivi paapa
Mativai
Lokamunaku Tallira Seethamma Neeku Choodaga Talleraa
Lokamaathanu Techchi Ippudu Paatakamuna kodigattukontivi
Eka Sharamuna Needu Shiramula Nekamaaruga Trunchu
Raamulu*

“I will teach you a lesson Oh, Ravana
This Lanka is not for you any longer Oh wicked one!
listen to my words without making fuss
You are destined to die soon, as you have not made use of your
sense of discrimination and have become evil minded
I will teach you a lesson Oh, Ravana
Sita is the mother of the universe
She is mother for you too

You abducted her and thus committed a great sin
Rama will cut off your heads with a single arrow
I will teach you a lesson Oh, Ravana
This Lanka not for you any longer”

Vibhishana protests against killing an emissary:

When Hanuman spoke thus, in utter fearlessness, with no bounds or limits, Ravana was enraged beyond control. He rose, spouting fire and slapping his thighs in challenge he roared an order to his henchmen to kill the impertinent monkey. Everyone rushed to where Hanuman sat bound in snake ropes. Just at that moment, Vibhishana, Ravana’s brother, entered the Hall, followed by his retinue. He prostrated before his elder brother and said, protestingly²², “Master! It is not right to kill an emissary. Raja dharma will not approve the deed. Punish him in any other manner, but do not pronounce the sentence of death.” (*RKRV Part II p.150*) This is quite contrary to the accepted code of conduct of a king. To kill an ambassador or to punish one who has come as a messenger on behalf of someone else is not the right code of conduct for a king of the country. Vibhishana tried to explain to Ravana this principle by which he should not punish one who has brought a message and Vibhishana tried to get Hanuman released. (*SSB 1977 p.115*)

²² See Chapter, *Ravana - Vibhishana explains to Ravana the Code of conduct of a king – killing of an ambassador contrary to accepted conduct.*

The ministers of Ravana supported this stand and declared that what he had suggested was the noblest truth. Ravana laughed in scorn at their absurd ideas of right and wrong. Still, he climbed down and said, “Well, mutilate him and send him off.” The ministers gathered in a group to decide on the mutilation. They came to the conclusion that monkeys are proud of their tails and would fain keep them intact long and strong. Someone suggested that the best punishment would be to wind sheets of cloth on the tail, pour oil until it soaks and drips and then set fire to the tail. This plan got unanimous acceptance. They exulted among themselves at the brilliance of the idea. “The tailless monkey will proceed to its master and bring him here for avenging the loss. Then we can witness the manliness of his master and his might.” There was a spate of whispers in the Hall.

Hanuman’s tail set on fire:

Hanuman was watching their movements, listening to their confabulations, and laughing within himself all the while. When they had finished, he burst into a thunderbolt of laughter! The Rakshasas were enraged at this display of insulting behaviour. They procured cloth and oil and started the process of winding and soaking. But the more they wound and soaked, the longer grew the tail! Miles of cloth and tanks of oil had to be ordered. News of the wonder spread all over the City and crowds of men, women and children ran towards the Hall to witness the miracle.



Figure 3: Hanuman's tail is set on fire

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Description	English: Hanuman then allows himself to be captured by Ravana, who sets his tail on fire; bazaar art, c.1910's
Date	1910
Source	http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/bce_299_200/ramayana/hanvisit/hanvisit.html
Author	bazaar art

Meanwhile, bands of musicians led the procession. Crowds began clapping hands. Hanuman was led along the streets with oil soaked cloth wound along the whole length of his tail. At last, the Central Square of the City of Lanka was reached. There, before a huge crowd of eager citizens, a burning flame was applied to the tip of Hanuman's tail.

Hanuman sets Lanka on fire:

Suddenly, Hanuman assumed his subtle form, and so the ropes that had bound him became too loose and fell off. He could now assume his natural size and jump about. He rose in one jump on to the top of a golden mansion. He shouted Rama, Rama, and made the Rakshasas shudder in fear, for, a strong wind rose from nowhere and blew with great speed. Hanuman somersaulted in the air and was beside himself with joy. He jumped from one mansion to another, with the burning tail trailing behind him. The tail grew longer and longer. The conflagration swelled in size as he moved from street to street. The mansions all over the City of Lanka were caught in the conflagration and changed into heaps of ashes. The Rakshasas fled desperately with their wives and children, forsaking their burning homes, eager to save their lives. To add to the confusion, cattle, horses, mules and elephants broke away from their sheds and ran helter-skelter in panic and pain. The entire City was enveloped in a shroud of wails, cries, roars and trumpeting. "Oh! Save us." "Oh! Take us to a safe place"... Agonising appeals like these rose from the throats of women and children and echoed from the sky.

Lanka was caught in the throes of total destruction. Ravana himself came to know of the calamity pretty soon. He ordered

that the monkey be surrounded by soldiers with weapons and mortars. Those who proceeded towards Hanuman scattered in panic when the burning tail of Hanuman flailed them mercilessly. Many were killed by that flaming tail. Women²³ clamoured and called on the clouds to shower rain and stop the fire from spreading.

Malyavantha saw their plight and said within himself, “No, this is not fire that can be put out by rain! This is the unbearable grief of Sita.” Others said, “This is the flame of anger against Ravana. It is the fiery form of the curse he has to go through. It will burn this city to ashes.” The huge flame hopped from rooftop, without any sign of exhaustion. Sometimes, Hanuman made himself small, sometimes, gigantic; but the pace of destruction was the same, whatever size he assumed. The crackle of the flames and the incessant thud of falling walls could be heard from all sides. *(RKR Part II p. 150-154)*

All the residents in the city came out into streets in great panic. They were wondering and discussing among themselves: Who is this monkey? Wherefrom has it come? Who sent it? Our entire city is burning. Where can we go now?.. Only one house in Lanka, that of Vibhishana was safe. Thus, the residents of Lanka had to pay for their sins. The Law of Karma is immutable and inescapable. People have to suffer the consequences of their evil deeds. Whatever one does, whether good or bad, will come back to him. *(SSS Vol.42 p.141-142)*

²³ See Chapter, *Mandodari* - HANUMAN’S ADVICE TO MANDODARI:

Sita heard the news. She raised her head and had one long look at the smoke and sparkle surrounding the garden. The sky was darkened by smoke! The garden too had become uncomfortably hot. Sita called upon the God of Fire without delay and prayed that He should save Hanuman, the genuine Bhaktha of Rama. Since she prayed out of a compassionate heart, it became suddenly cool and comfortable for Hanuman. Ravana suffered loss and dishonour for discarding the advice given by elders and for indulging in vulgar talk, when he was shown the proper road. In just under a wink, the capital city of his empire was wiped out by fire. The house where Kumbhakarna was asleep, and the house of that super most among devotees, Vibhishana were the only two that were not erased by the fire. (*RKR V Part II p.154*)

After causing incalculable damage to Lanka, Hanuman plunged into the ocean to extinguish the flames on his tail. When he surveyed Lanka burning furiously, Hanuman regretted his action. He thought that Sita might have been burnt in the flames. (*SSB 1996 p.57-58*)

Hanuman then assumed the form of a miniature monkey and *rushed to Asoka grove to find out if Sita was safe*²⁴.

Hanuman asks Sita for proof of meeting her and leaves Lanka:

He prostrated before her and said, “Mother! I shall relate to Rama all that you have asked me to. Give me something so that I could prove that I have met you.” Sita thought for a while, and taking from her head a gem-set jewel, she placed it in

²⁴ *SSB 1996 p.58*

Hanuman's hand. Hanuman pressed it over his eye reverently and fell at Sita's feet again overcome with joy. Sita blessed him, and said, "Hanuman! You saw with your own eyes the torture Ravana is inflicting on me, and therefore there is no need for me to dilate on that. Tell the Lord that he must grant me the fortune of his darsan. Tell him that I prayed for it again and again. Tell him that, with Lakshmana, he must lay siege to Lanka, within a month. Hanuman! These three days I spent happily, speaking to you of Rama. My heart has become calm and cool. I cannot imagine how I will spend both night and day, hereafter, when you are gone. I shall be a fish in a dry pond. Of course, the omniscient Lord is ever watching over me; but when, oh when shall I feast my eyes on those lotuseyes of His?" Hanuman tried to infuse faith and courage in her mind by his assurances and assertions. He prayed, pleaded and prostrated again and again. At last he turned toward his path.

Before leaving the Asoka Park, Hanuman bellowed a farewell roar, which shook the earth, and made the men, women and children of the island shiver in terror. Without any more delay Hanuman reached the shore of the sea. He filled his mind with the thought of Rama and his eyes with His charm; and even while meditating on that Name and Form, he leaped over the sea and reached the other shore in a trice. That day was the Full Moon of the month *Karthik*. The cool moonlight was as balm to the heart. The name of Rama implanted strength and joy. Hanuman had won. The monkey groups who had espied Hanuman from the distance coming through the horizon were elated beyond words.

Hanuman narrates what transpired in Lanka:

They were filled with joy. Their faces blossomed. They shone with a new splendour as they saw him come nearer and nearer. They exulted that they had fulfilled the mission on which they were sent by Rama. Three full days they had waited for his return, and their hearts had gone dry with despair. Now they clothed themselves in leaves and flowers. They ranged themselves along the shore, pressing forward to clasp Hanuman to their bosoms as he landed. As soon as Hanuman touched ground, they asked him about what happened in Lanka, about Sita and her welfare, and circumstances and conditions of Lanka. Hanuman told them all they wanted, with high enthusiasm. *(RKRV Part II p.154-156)*

He was greeted with congratulations and benedictions of victory from the ecstatic battalions of *vanaras*. They praised Hanuman and said, “Hanuman! It is by such timely, helpful and sacred spirit of service to Rama that you have won his heart. You have indeed brought good news. May all auspiciousness greet Rama from now on?” *(SSB 2002 p.120)*

Realising that the monkeys were proceeding towards him with the news of a successful mission, Rama and Lakshmana seated themselves on a huge boulder watching the group hurrying forward. They advanced in leaps and bounds, quite excited, and fell at Rama’s feet.

First, Rama inquired about their health and welfare. Meanwhile, Jambavan, the senior-most among them rose and said, “Those who have earned your compassion are indeed blessed. That endows them with all virtues. Such a one’s renown will

encompass the three worlds.” He praised Hanuman in various ways. Hanuman rose and prostrated before Rama. He described in detail the island of Lanka. He told Him of the plight of Sita with tears of joy and commiseration flowing from his eyes, and placed in Rama’s hands the crest-jewel²⁵ that he had brought with extreme care and caution. Rama clasped Hanuman to his bosom. He said, “Oh Son of the Wind-god! Tell me more of Sita, her plight and her feelings.”

Hanuman said, “Oh Lord of my Life. It is impossible to describe. Sita is reduced to bones, for she does not take food nor does she sleep. She is counting every minute praying for your Darsan. She has no other thought than the recitation of your name. She wanted me to inform you of her countless prostrations. She remembered Lakshmana often and shed profuse tears. The sharp verbal dagger thrusts that Ravana administers every morning and evening when he comes to her and speaks to her, I have heard with my own ears. Mother does not listen to his prattle in the least.

She is ever melting away in the agony of separation and in thoughts centred on you.” “Save Sita this very moment!” cried Hanuman falling at the feet of Rama? Hearing these words, Lakshmana rose in vengeful anger and wept at Sita’s condition. The picture of Sita in Lanka burnt his inner being.

He said at last, “Brother! Do not delay. Save my sister-in-law!” Rama replied with a smile, “Lakshmana! Do not hurry. Bide

²⁵ The crown jewel 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. (*SSB 2002 p.120-121*)

your time. There is a time when each step has to be taken. Do not be dejected when grief invades or exults when joy flows in.” Rama consoled him with soft and soothing words.

Then he called Hanuman near, and invited him to sit close to him. He seated him near his feet. He asked him, “Hanuman! What is the nature of the rule that Ravana has established in Lanka? How did you set Lanka on fire?” (*RKRV Part II p.157-158*)

Hanuman explained to Rama everything that had occurred in Lanka.

*“Oh! Sri Rama, listen to my prayers!
Accept the sacred jewel Sita has sent for you
I have seen Sita shivering like a parrot in a cage
Surrounded she is by a number of fierce demonesses
Oh! How they scare her by their threats and weapons
Poor mother can only bow her head in fear and
anguish.
Oh! Sri Rama, listen to my prayers!*

*Firstly, there is Indrajit
Then comes the commander in chief Prahasta
The vast courtyards, the palatial bungalows
The big markets and the dazzling orchids
I have seen them all!
Oh! Rama, listen to my prayers!”* (Telugu Song)

In this way Hanuman described in great detail everything that he had seen in Lanka. (*SSB 2002 p.120-121*)

Hanuman said, “Lord, there is nothing you do not know. What shall I say of the strength of monkeys! We are only animals that jump about from branch to branch. How can we jump from one shore of the sea to the other? How can we overpower the Rakshasas? How can we destroy the City of Lanka through fire? All these were due solely to you Grace and Glory. The strength and courage that your Name confers helped us to achieve those things. I am absolutely unable by myself to do anything. The Ring of yours that I had with me guarded me and guided me aright. Lord! Seeing the Ring and holding it in her hand, how happy was Mother! ‘Is this a dream? Or, was it really sent by Rama to me?’ She wondered thus, doubted thus, and finally became firm in faith. Lord, her grief, the extreme anguish of hers, they set fire to Lanka and destroyed it, not I. You chose me as an instrument and you achieved these great tasks with me as a tool. All this is a blessing bestowed on me, since you have great affection towards devotees. Lord, nothing is impossible for one who has won your Grace.”

When Rama heard these words steeped in sincerity and humility, he was very pleased. He turned to Lakshmana and said, “Brother, prepare for the campaign, without delay.” Watching the earth-shaking forces that were gathered and the preparations that Jambavan and Sugriva made, quite soon, the Gods themselves were astounded, and gratified. The monkey warriors touched the feet of Rama and raised a triumphal roar. Rama blessed them all by his glance of compassion and benediction. Each warrior became a mountain peak that had grown wings! They marched forward with exultation at every step. Auspicious omens greeted them as soon as they stepped forward. Sita too at Asoka Garden

sensed auspiciousness that very moment. (*RKRV Part II p.158-159*)

Hanuman describes the devotion of Vibhishana:

While Rama was busy talking to them (Vanaras), 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. (*SSB 1996 p.61-62*)

The might of the Vanara force described to Ravana by Suka:

The messenger, Suka²⁶, (sent by Ravana) stood before the throne (of Ravana) with folded palms, and said, “Lord! Had I a thousand tongues, I cannot describe the might of those Vanara armies. What a galaxy of heroic warriors are they! There are Vanaras of many different colours, of all ages and grades, of gigantic stature and strength. One shakes in terror when one casts his eyes at them. Why, even to picture them in the mind or think about them is a terror-striking experience. Imagine the might of that one Vanara who killed your son and reduced the City to ashes! It is all the result of their being reflections and echoes of the invincible might of Rama himself. Even the tiniest brat among the monkeys becomes, by that token, a horrifying monster. There are monkey warriors with various names, and each of them is endowed with the strength of many herds of elephants. Dwivida, Mainda, Nila, Nala, Angada, Vikata, Dadhimukha, Kesari, Kumuda, Daja, Gavaksha, Jambavantha—these are the Generals. Every one of them is equal in might and military skill to their Ruler, Sugriva. There are hundreds of thousands more among them, who are of equal might. Their number is beyond calculation. Their fury and ferocity can destroy earth, heaven and the nether regions, as if these were but heaps of straw. Lord, I heard that their number is eighteen Padmas. Each Padma has a valiant General at its head. Emperor, I did not find a single Vanara, from the highest to the lowest who doubted their victory; nor was there anyone who had the least trace of nervousness on the eve of the march. They are all tightening their muscles to pound this City. They are only waiting for the signal from Rama. They have not had it so far.

²⁶ See Chapter, *Ravana* - **Ravana sent a messenger**

“Whether the ocean yields to them and gives the right of way or not, they are determined to build a causeway of stones, and succeed in their venture. They are baring teeth and gnashing them, boasting that they would squeeze Ravana out of shape and reduce him into a handful of pulp. Fear strikes everyone who listens to their exultant roar and challenging call. The instant they hear the name Ravana uttered within earshot, they get so enraged that they pluck giant trees, root and branch, and brandish them in angry demonstration of hate. They are swaying and swinging, surging and shouting, in their eagerness to consume this City. They have equally redoubtable bears too among them. To crown all, they have Rama as their leader, capable of overwhelming millions of ‘Death-deities.’ Hundreds of thousands of *Adishesas*, each of which is blessed with a thousand heads and tongues, cannot do full justice if asked to describe the heroism and military skill of Rama. With one arrow shot from his bow, he can dry up even the Ocean.” (*RKRV Part II p.171-174*)

THE BRIDGE:

The bridge and the service of the Vanaras:

Looking at the sea, Rama questioned how it was proposed to cross it. Many among the Vanaras suggested means and methods. Rama called together the ministers and directed them to construct the bridge 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?” Rama smiled at the simple sincere loyalty and valour of these devotees.

He directed them to install Rama in their hearts and throw hills, hillocks, mountains and rocks into the sea. At this, the Vanara heroes ran in all directions, and brought back entire hills on their heads and shoulders, as if they were as light as balls used for games. They stood in one long line and passed the hills from shoulder to shoulder, all the while repeating aloud the Name of Rama. Off and on they also uprooted huge trees and passed them onward to the bridge site, where Nala²⁷ and Nila were casting the materials into the water.

The whole of that day they worked without rest and with no thought of food or sustenance. They built a length of fourteen yojanas in one day. Refreshed by a good night's sleep, they rose before dawn, during the *Brahma muhurtham* itself, and resumed work. They acclaimed with cheers, "Jai to Sri Ramachandra, our Lord," and hurried to the various corners of the land in search of hills and mountains. They brought them onto the shore and piled them there.

The second day, the bridge was extended by another twenty yojanas. The next day, they were able to build it for a further length of twenty-one yojanas. The fourth day saw the bridge extending over a further twenty-two yojanas. And, on the fifth day, by constructing a further twenty-three yojanas, they completed the 100-yojana bridge in another successful spurt.

Thus, Nala and Nila, unconcerned with exhaustion or the need for rest, intent on fulfilling the task assigned by Rama for the

²⁷ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Two Boons - Abduction Of Sita And Search For Sita – The bridge*

completion of his mission, were able to announce in the Presence of Rama that the bridge was ready, because his Name and Form were ever before those who toiled for its completion.

Rama was informed through Sugriva that the hundred yojana bridge, he had resolved upon as finished and ready to be used. Rama and Lakshmana were pleased at the devotion and sense of duty of the Vanaras, who finished the job so soon and so well. Rama directed the Ruler of the Monkeys, Sugriva, to pass along the long line of Vanaras the order that each one should deposit the hill he was transporting at the time, at the very place he stood, and take a little rest before returning to base. Sugriva conveyed the order to those who were engaged in passing from shoulder to shoulder, the boulders and peaks for the bridge. Hanuman was at that moment transporting a huge hill from the far north. When he heard that Rama had ordered that it be deposited, he cast it down, near Brindavan where he was at the time. He was surprised to hear a loud wail from the fallen peak. "Alas," it cried, "I have lost the chance of service to Rama." It could not be consoled or comforted. When Hanuman brought its condition to the notice of Rama, Rama smiled in appreciation. He said, "Ah! Even mountains are yearning anxiously to participate in this task!" He expressed joy at their enthusiasm. He told Hanuman, "Go quickly. Console the hill. Tell it not to be sad. During the coming Dwapara Age, I shall hold that hill high on my palm, for seven days and nights. On hearing this, the peak will be happy." That assurance made it the Govardhana Hill, which the Lord held aloft as promised in the Tretha Age.

On the fifth day, Rama sat on the seashore, and was delighted when he saw the bridge. “Oh Vanaras,” he said, “Your devotion and skill in service are beyond description. By your sense of dedication you have won my heart.” (*RKRV Part II 171, 179-180*)

THE SEIZE

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. The entire city was panic-stricken. The *Vanara* army was all over the countryside around Lanka. They were on the hills, on the treetops, on the plains and everywhere! The monkeys were strangers to the Lankans till they saw Hanuman. The memory of the destruction that Hanuman caused during his previous visit was all too fresh in their minds. They were wondering among themselves.

*“Oh! Wherefrom has this terrible monkey come?
Who has sent this messenger of destruction to Lanka?
Our houses are in ruins, our families are homeless
All the houses are on fire, oh! Where are we to take
shelter?
We hear he is Rama’s messenger come to see Sita
He is contented with the cooling vision of Sita
But his anger has heated up our Lanka!
Oh! What destruction! What a calamity!
Our city lies in ruins, thanks to the monkey!”*

*Oh! Wherefrom has this terrible monkey come?
 Ravana will face certain ruin
 He has abducted chaste and pious Sita,
 If the messenger be so strong
 Oh! What can one say of the master!”* (Telugu Song)

In this way, the citizens of Lanka were terror stricken. The monkey which had caused tremendous destruction earlier had now reappeared with more of its kind! Ravana’s ministers, courtiers and allies were at a loss as to what to do. How did the *Vanara* army cross the ocean? The mighty Hanuman could do it, but what about the entire army? Rama propitiated the God of Ocean with an arrow. The deity responded and facilitated the crossing. The *Vanaras* were raising war cries against the demons. Ravana could not stand the noise. A fierce battle was imminent. Ravana was sure to meet his end in the war. This was also the popular sentiment of the citizens of Lanka. They all wondered, “Why is it that this wicked person is keen to meet his doom? He is aiming to burn to ashes not just himself but his entire kingdom as well”. Everybody was thus criticizing Ravana within themselves. None of them entertained any pleasant feelings for Ravana. (*SSB 2002 p.122-124*)

War camp is set up on the shores of Lanka:

The Vanaras put up a nice camp for Rama and Lakshmana on the Suvela Hill. They prepared soft rests for them, heaping grass, leaves and flowers, and made them into nice beds. Rama appeared as soon as they had finished. He sat upon it, to give them joy. A little later, he placed his head on Sugriva’s lap and went to sleep. Bows and arrows were kept in readiness on both

sides of the bed. The Vanaras were scratching their palms which itched, in anticipation of hitting Ravana and killing him. They were holding back only because Rama had not given them the “go.” Hanuman, the lucky, and the Crown Prince Angada were reverentially massaging the feet of Rama. Lakshmana was standing at the foot of the bed, ready with his bow and arrow, observing the face of Rama with one-pointed attention. At this moment, Rama looked out towards the East. His eyes fell on the Moon, which was rising above the horizon. “Friends,” he said, “Look at the Moon. There is a dark patch on the Moon. Don’t you see it?” he asked. Each one of them answered about the patch the way he felt; but Hanuman confessed, “Lord! I do not see any dark patch on the Moon. I see it as the reflection of your face. So I do not see the patch you mentioned, or any other blemish.” (*RKRV Part II 189- 189*)

Hanuman kills Dhoomraksha and Mahodara:

The Vanaras were agog with excitement. They drew enormous strength from the thought of Rama, their guardian and guide. Each of them was filled with the might of many elephants. They all jumped about, impatient, to start the fray. That day the enemy generalissimo was Dhoomraksha. He fought desperately, but he was killed the next day by Hanuman.

Mahodara came next. Hanuman jumped on him with a reverberating roar, and fought with him, tooth and nail. Soon, he was able to cut Mahodara into pieces. (*RKRV Part II 220- 221*)

HANUMAN BRINGS THE SANJEEVA PARVATHA

Hanuman fetches the physician of Lanka:

Indrajit²⁸, the son of Ravana, who had defeated Indra himself, entered the battle. It was the second day of the battle. He was geared splendidly in the battle-attire. (*SSB 2002 p.124*)

Lakshmana and Meghanada were involved in deadly combat. Each appeared the other's equal in skill and strength. Afraid that his death was imminent, Meghanada took on hand the supremely potent weapon, Sakti, that Brahma had gifted, and aimed it at the very heart of Lakshmana,. The weapon hit the heart of Lakshmana. Lakshmana fell on the ground, in a "mortal" swoon.

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. Even while moving in, he was hurt by a doubt whether Sushena would comply with his request

²⁸ Also known as Meghanada

to come into the camp of Rama. So Hanuman resorted to a ruse. He lifted the house of Sushena with him inside it, and brought it intact over the intervening distance. When Sushena emerged, he found himself in the presence of Rama himself.

Sushena fell at the feet of Rama, and disclosed the name of the mountain where the drug, which could save 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.

The story of Kalanemi:

Meanwhile, one of his spies reported to Ravana that Sushena, the physician, had reached the presence of Rama. Ravana consulted Kalanemi²⁹ on this new development and its consequences. Kalanemi replied, “Ravana! This Hanuman is an impossible person! Did he not set Lanka in flames even when you were looking on? What special skill or strength do I have to contain and conquer this Hanuman? The time to do the right is still not past. Give up the absurd notion that it is possible for you to win a victory over Rama. Go, take refuge at the feet of Rama. Your fortunes will get better thereby. Forsake your pride and obstinacy.” Kalanemi gave Ravana good counsel, but what he looked for was something different. Therefore, Ravana condemned him.

²⁹ Kalanemi (Kalanemi). Demon minister of Ravana, who advised him to take refuge in Rama (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Shaking with rage, he shouted. “Are you prepared to obey me? If not, prepare yourself for death.” Kalanemi thought that it would be much more beneficial to die at the hands of Rama than being killed by Ravana. So, he left for Rama’s camp. Exercising his magical skills, he sought a lake in the centre of a lovely park, and wearing the robes of a rishi, he sat in deep meditation on its bank. Hanuman who was on his way to the mountain range where the life-saving drug was to be found, was exhausted, since he had had no rest after the fierce engagement with Meghanada. He felt that a few moments’ rest and a drink from the cool lake would be worthwhile, for he could proceed thereafter all the quicker.

Hanuman fell at the feet of the rishi, who was reciting the name of Rama and extolling his exploits and excellences. He was delighted. He too sang the Name “Rama! Rama!” The disguised Kalanemi told him further, “Oh Vanara! There is a war being fought between Rama and Ravana. I am watching it every day from here. There is no doubt that Rama will soon emerge as victor without fail.” Hanuman was elated at this. He told the sage that he was thirsty. The sage told him that his water vessel had cool refreshing water and he offered it to him. Hanuman said, “Master, this little quantity cannot quench my thirst to any appreciable degree.” Then the rishi told him that there was a lake nearby and he could have a dip in its limpid waters and also drink his fill, in order to get refreshed. Hanuman agreed and proceeded towards the lake indicated. He stepped into the lake, until his feet were immersed in the water; just then, a crocodile crept up from within the lake and held his foot in its vile grip. Of course, it could not do any further harm. Hanuman shook it off

and bit it to death. As soon as its crocodile life ended, it stood before Hanuman as a resplendent Heavenly Being. Hanuman was surprised at this vision. He asked the Appearance, “Who are you?” That person answered, “Oh Servant of Rama! My load of sin melted away when I had the good luck of seeing you and being touched by you. Kalanemi and I were musicians, Gandharvas, at the Court of Indra in Heaven. One day, the sage, Durvasa, celebrated for his short temper, arrived at Court. When our eyes fell on that wild ferocious figure, we burst into laughter. So he cursed both of us to be born on earth as Rakshasas. We pleaded for mercy, holding his feet and shedding tears of contrition. He took compassion on us and said, ‘Well! You will take birth in Lanka. The Lord will be incarnating as Rama, in the last quarter of the Tretha Age and a terrible battle will ensue between Rama and the Ruler of Lanka.

During that battle, Lakshmana, the brother, will get fatally hurt by the weapon called Sakthi and Hanuman, a devoted servant of Rama, will be journeying to the Sanjivi Mountain, green with bushes of drugs. You will both be liberated from the Rakshasa encumbrance by contact with him.’ Oh Vanara! The rishi who lives near by, who directed you here, is no rishi at all. He is a Rakshasa in disguise. He is named Kalanemi.”

Hanuman approached Kalanemi, and shouted in his ear, “Dear Preceptor! Accept the offering I propose to make in return for the lesson you taught me. You are my Guru and I have to pay you fees.” What had happened was that Kalanemi had wondered why Hanuman had taken such a long time to quench his thirst and return, and he had guessed that the reason was the revelation of

his own identity and history by his brother who was living his curse out there, as a crocodile. So, Kalanemi pretended to be too deeply involved in *dhyana* (meditation) to recognise the person who stood before him and accosted him. Hanuman knew the disguise that Kalanemi was hiding under. He caught hold of his neck and twisted it fast until he died, with the words, “Rama! Rama!” emerging from his lips with the last breath.

Hanuman meets Bharatha on his way back:

Kicking aside the corpse, Hanuman hastened towards the Drona Mountain Range and reaching the Sanjivini Hill, started looking for the drug he had come for. But he failed to identify it among the plentiful vegetation with which the hill was carpeted thick. Time was running out. His return was already much delayed. He was conscious of the urgency of Rama’s Command. He resorted to another plan. He plucked the entire hill and leapt through the sky carrying it on his palm.

He had to pass over the City of Ayodhya on his way to Lanka during the hours of night. Bharatha was at that time pining alone, wakeful but worried about his brother and his life in the forest. Suddenly, the moonlight was darkened by a shadow, the shadow of Hanuman and the hill falling upon him. Bharatha inferred that the monkey with the mountain load must be a Rakshasa that had assumed that form proceeding on some wicked mission. He decided to destroy it before it could accomplish any mischief. Seizing his bow, he shot an arrow at it, drawing the string right back to the ear and with good aim. When the arrow struck him, Hanuman gave out a shrill cry, “Rama!” When that name fell on

his ears, Bharatha³⁰ stood up shocked and ran towards the fallen monkey. From Hanuman he learnt the story of his mission and the urgency of his errand. He was overcome with grief. He embraced Hanuman and pleaded that he must be pardoned for his foolish haste. Bharatha broke into tears. He prayed, “If it is true that I have adored Rama through thought, word and deed and that I have not deviated from this path, let this Vanara be restored to his original health and strength.” When Bharatha lamented so deeply and took so firm a vow, Hanuman was relieved of his pain. He rose up fresh and free. Then a thought entered into him, to test the sincerity of Bharatha. He said, “Victory to the Lord of the Raghu Dynasty.” At this, Bharatha’s heart was so struck by anguish that he broke into loud sobs. He pleaded, “Oh Chief of Monkeys! Are Sita, Rama and Lakshmana keeping well? My mother, Sita, is she happy and in good spirits?” Bharatha shed tears of joy when he recollected the absent Sita and his brothers. At this, Hanuman related to him all that had happened. Bharatha was overwhelmed with sorrow when he heard the narration. He fainted and fell on the ground, when he heard that Lakshmana had lost consciousness on the field of battle. Recovering soon, Bharatha rose and said, “Hanuman! Pardon me for my foolish act. I ought not to cause

³⁰ While Anjaneya, was bringing the Sanjivini Mountain, he had to take a course that made the citizens of Nandigram see him in the sky; Bharatha, who saw the strange sight of a monkey carrying a hill, brought him down with an arrow and when he learnt that the hill had a drug which could cure Lakshmana who was stricken in battle, Bharatha offered to send the hill quicker to where Rama was, by shooting an arrow which could lift it and carry it fast. But, Anjaneya said, he could fly quicker than any arrow from the bow of the fastest marksman! Use your fullest powers to grasp the truth. Rely on your own skills, your own force; then, they too will develop to the utmost demand you make of them. That will give the greatest joy. (*SSS Vol.4 p.11*)

any further delay. Hasten with Sanjivi Hill, with the precious drug that can cure him. Proceed fast.” Hanuman fell at the feet of Bharatha and raised aloft the Hill on his palm. When he took off and flew into the horizon.

Revitalizing air of Sanjivini Peak saves the lives of Lakshmana and the dead Vanaras:

Hanuman appeared carrying the Sanjivini Peak on his upraised palm. Hanuman shone before their eyes as the embodiment of courage, made more loveable by the splendour of compassion. He touched ground and came among the Vanaras. The Vanaras shouted, “Hail! Hail!” They said, “You have made our lives worthwhile. Had you not come before dawn, we would all have plunged into the ocean and ended our lives, for we could not have survived Lakshmana or cared to exist without him. You have saved our lives.” 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. Meanwhile, as a result of contact with the vitalizing 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 Sanjivini 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. Another day dawned. War drums could be heard from the Rakshasa camp. (*RKR V Part II p.211-220*)

HANUMAN, THE CARRIER OF GOOD NEWS

Rama sends Hanuman on an errand to Ashokavana after Ravana's death:

Rama called Hanuman near and told him, “Oh Hanuman, Incomparable Hero! Go into Lanka on my errand once more and communicate to Sita all that has happened and return with authentic news about her condition.” Accordingly, Hanuman³¹ entered Lanka, went to the place where Sita was and fell at her holy feet. She asked him, “Are Rama and Lakshmana safe, with their Vanara forces? Is Rama, the Ocean of Compassion, safe and happy?” Hanuman replied with folded palms and bowed head. “Rama is safe and happy in all respects. He has killed Ravana and installed Vibhishana as the permanent Emperor of this land.” Sita was glad at the news of Rama's victory and Ravana's downfall. Her face brightened with joy. She felt a great thrill of delight. Tears of joy streamed from her eyes.

³¹ Hanuman was eagerly awaiting the day when he could communicate the joyous news to Sita. (*SSB 1996 p.91*)

Day named after Hanuman:

“Oh Leader of Vanaras! What can I offer you as a gift for conveying to me this best of news? Nothing can equal in value the comforting words you have spoken,” Sita said. Hanuman replied, “Mother! The bliss you evinced the blossoming of joy—they have given me as much as a gift of the three worlds. What more can I crave for? What greater fortune can anyone need than the fortune of seeing Rama victorious over the enemy and happy with his brother?” With these words, he prostrated once again at the feet of Sita. Sita said, “Oh Best among Vanaras! I am sunk in agony these ten months of separation from my Lord, and hence I could not see or know anything about the external world. I do not know which day of the week it is today, nor whether it is the bright or dark fortnight, or which day it is in that fortnight. Whatever it is, you have given me the most welcome and the most auspicious news. So, I shall name it the Mangala Day, (though it may generally be named otherwise. It was a Tuesday), meaning the Day that brought Mangala or auspiciousness and joy. May this Day be held sacred and may you, the bringer of this news, be adored specially on this day, more than on any other days of the week.” At this, Hanuman fell at her feet and stood with folded palms.

Sita pleaded with Hanuman, “Get me the boon of meeting the Embodiment of charm and compassion, my Lord, Rama. Do you not know that all this fighting and killing in war was for my sake, for the sake of restoring me to my Lord? Take me soon to the Lotus Feet of Rama,” she said plaintively. Hanuman could not bear the anguish that was patent in the words of Sita. He leapt

into the sky and reached Rama in a trice. He narrated all that happened during the meeting. (*RKRV Part II p. 262-263*)

CHARACTER OF HANUMAN AND LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

A Scholar and Great Devotee:

Hanuman is the brightest example of a realised soul. When he first presented himself before Rama and offered his services, Rama turned to Lakshmana and said, “Brother! Listen! Notice how Hanuman has mastered the Vedas. His speech is saturated with the humility and dedication which the Rig Veda embodies, the retentiveness and reverence that the Yajur Veda promotes and the intuitive vision that the Sama Veda grants. Hanuman knows all the scriptural texts. He is a genuine devotee. Sugriva is fortunate to have him as his minister, Hanuman, whose thoughts, words and deeds are offered to God” When these three are in perfect harmony, the person wins the grace of God, as hanuman succeeded in securing. (*SSS Vol.19 p.71*)

Hanuman had succeeded in co-ordinating the thought, the word and the act. Therefore he had the unique distinction of being great in physical strength, mental stability and virtuous character. He shines as an invaluable gem among the personalities of the Ramayana. He was also a great scholar, who had mastered, of all things, the six schools or grammar! He knew the four Vedas and the six Sastras. The *Gita* says that a scholar is one who sees the same Divine force motivating everyone - *Pandithaha Samadarsinaha*. Hanuman was the very picture of humility, born out of genuine sincerity and wisdom. He realised that the Rama principle, Atmarama, was illumining every being and he adored it above all else. (*SSS Vol.10 p. 90*)

Man’s mind alone is responsible both for his bondage and for his liberation. The final result of the work will depend on the attitude with which the work is done. Hanuman is one who had synthesized his thoughts, his words and deed; and he could become an important character. He was proficient in all the different types of grammar. He was a scholar proficient in the four *Vedas* and

six *Sastras*. The scholarship of Hanuman made him look at everything with equanimity and equal mindedness. (*SSB 1977 p.94*)

Pandithaha Samadarsinaha

Hanuman is one who attained the unity of thought word and deed. He was great scholar. He was well versed in the nine types of *Vykarana* (grammar). He had in-depth knowledge of the four Vedas and six *Sastras*. He was adept in the *Paisachika*, *Gajakarna* and *Gokarna* disciplines. He was the first person to write the Bhagavad Gita of Lord Krishna into Paisachika language for the first time. In keeping with Gita, saying “Pandithaha Samadarsinaha” (A scholar in one who sees unity at all times at all places) Hanumantha was scholar *par excellence* who visualised unity everywhere. Added to this quality, he had the wealth of humility in abundance. Hence, he could tread the most sacred path of Rama Thathwa. He was always happy to visualize the Rama thathwa radiating in every individual. Whatever objects he touched, he used to first examine whether there was Ramanama in it or not. Those that do not contain the vibrations of Ramanama were equal to stones in his view. In his own body, every hair used to chant the Ramanama. People forget God when they are happy. Some do not think of God even in difficult times. Hanuman was one who maintained perfect equanimity both in times of happy tidings and in difficulties as well. He had unparalleled might. He had noble qualities, with no trace of ego. He was a great soul who renounced *mamakara* (feeling of mine). That the reason why Sri Rama extolled him as ‘*Santhudu*’ (serene person) ‘*Gunavanthudu*’ (of noble qualities) and ‘*Balavanthudu*’ (a mighty warrior). (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.58-59*)

Knew the power of Namasmarana

Hanuman (courage) had a vision, unclouded by desire or ignorance. His only desire was fixed on the Name of Rama and the Form. So he was able to leap across the ocean, smooth and safe. (*SSS Vol.19 p. 70*)

The darsana of Rama conferred on Hanuman an enormous reinforcement of power, even physical power. Or else how could he have jumped across a hundred miles of sea? A task that Jambavan, Angada and other Vanara heroes would not dare venture upon, Hanuman accomplished by mere recitation of the Name of Rama. (*SSS Vol.10 p.91*)

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. Hanuman showed the strength and necessary of self – confidence in a clear manner. (*SSB 1977 p.97-98*)

The youth of India must pay special attention to this feature of Hanuman's life. He never calculated the pros and cons.... can I succeed? Why am I, of all people, chosen for this mission? - When Rama asked him to discover the whereabouts of Sita. "Why should I weigh the chances of success or failure?" he said to himself. "The Rama who chose me will bear the responsibility." He decided to pray and do his best. While on his flight, a hill rose up from the sea and offered him rest and hospitality, but he refused the invitation. A demoness rose from the sea and invited him to fight with her before he proceeded further, but he brushed her aside and flew on. He sped through the sky like one of Rama's own arrows. Self –confidence was the basis of his courage; over it he erected the walls of self-satisfaction; on them he constructed the roof of self-sacrifice, and he dwelt in that mansion enjoying the bliss of self-Realization. (*SSS Vol.10 p.92*)

It is said, “*roma romamu Rama Namame*’. Every single hair recited “Rama Nama”. His tail was formidable flail, for it was suffused with the might of the Name. He is also called SUNDARA, the charming, the Beautiful. Why? Because, he had Rama installed in his heart; since the splendour of Rama reflected on his face, he was charming to behold. He was a charming companion because he spoke of Rama only, sang of Rama alone. (*SSS Vol.5 p.83*)

He would present himself wherever the glory of Rama is sung – Experience of Tulsidas

There were many Sages and Saints who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Rama. Tulsidas was a great devotee of God who lived on the Chitrakoota mountain. Every day after bath, he would offer holy water to a

tree. One day, a spirit appeared in front of him and said; ‘Oh master, while you discourse on Ramayana, there is a person, an old man who comes here first and is the last one to leave. Tomorrow, you must cling on to his feet and ask for a boon.’ The spirit disappeared.

On the next day, Tulsidas was busy preparing sandal paste and singing the name of Rama. After sometime, the old Brahmin came there. Tulsidas began discoursing on the Ramayana. At the end of the discourse, everyone went except the Brahmin. Tulsidas went to him and fell at his feet. The Brahmin asked Tulsidas what boon he wanted. Tulsidas replied: “I want to have the darshan of the beautiful form of Sri Ram.” The Brahmin then said; “You will have the darshan of Sri Rama in a few days.” Who was this Brahmin? It was none other than Hanuman. He would present himself wherever the glory of Rama is sung. Hanuman always passes in to rapture while listening to the glory of Rama,

A few days later, a boy of tender age came to Tulsidas when he was preparing sandal paste for the Lord. He approached Tulsidas and said; “Oh grand sire, will you give some paste to me? Tulsidas readily agreed to do this favour for the boy. While he was giving the paste to the boy, the birds of the tree felt pity for Tulsidas, since he did not recognise that the boy was the same Lord Rama. For whom he had been pining for so many years. The Lord is everywhere:

*Whether you are in the forest or in the desert,
Whether you are in town or village,
Whether you are on the mountain- top or mid- stream,
The Lord helps the hapless ones.*

Two days after this incident, the old man asked Tulsidas whether he had seen the Lord on the previous day. Tulsidas replied in the negative. Then the old man said: “Who do you think came yesterday in the form of a boy to take the sandal paste to worship Him in one form only. Ramachandra is the in – dweller of your heart. Your heart is the altar of God. Don’t install anyone in the altar of your heart except the Lord. My son, you may give room to your kith and kin in any part of your house, but do not install them in the altar of your shrine. Kith and kin come in the middle and go away in the middle.

Serve them, but do not give your heart to them. Fill your heart with compassion. A heart laden with compassion is the temple of the Lord. “Hrudah + Daya makes Hrudaya,” Hanuman taught this lesson to Tulsidas and disappeared. (*SSB 1996 p.72-73*)

A Dedicated servant:

Angada said to Hanuman, "Oh Son of the Wind-god, you are the dedicated servant of Rama. Your devotion is indeed deep. You were blessed first among all of us with the Darshan of Rama through your intelligence, diplomacy and moral pressure, you established friendship between Rama and our ruler Sugriva." (*RKRV Part II p. 120*)

Hanuman, a great devotee of Lord Sri Rama, always considered himself “*Daasoham Kosalendrasya*”. As the servant of Lord Sri Rama he enjoyed great happiness in that feeling. But, how long? As long as he was a *Dasa*. After some time, he was separated from his Lord. Due to this separation, he underwent great agony. Then, he developed “*Soham*” feeling. When he developed this feeling of oneness with the Lord, he did not experience any pain. In “*Daasoham*” state, there is a feeling of separation between the Lord and his devotee. But, in the *Soham* state, there is no separation. Where there is no separation between the Lord and his devotee, there is bliss. First and foremost, one who is desirous of attaining Divinity, must control his desires and anger. (*Bhagavad Gita Part I p. 126/127*)

Dear to Rama:

Rama said to Hanuman. "You are as dear to me as Lakshmana is." (*RKRV Part II p.82*)

Total Surrender and humility:

Hanuman said, “Swami, (Rama) You asked me, You commanded me, so I am sure that You will give me the need skills, strength and abilities to cross the ocean and fulfil the task entrusted to me.” (*Alarm Bells! Divine p.45*)

Serve the Lord, as His faithful unquestioning servant – this is the path of Hanuman in Ramayana. He had no will or wish of his own. His prayer was to be a fit instrument for the purposes of the master. (*SSS Vol.6 p.167*)

Hanuman was amazed at the variety of multi-coloured birds that fluttered to and fro in clusters within the parks. Hanuman claimed onto a charming mountain nearby and thought within himself, “This success is not due to my skill or strength. It is entirely due to the Grace and Blessings of Rama only. **(RKRV Part II p.122)**

Hanuman was highly intelligent, in matters relating to the Divine, he made no distinction between good and bad. He carried out implicitly whatever he was ordered to do. He did not care to enquire whether it was right or wrong. Why? Because he regarded whatever Rama said as Veda vaakya (Gospel truth). God’s word is beyond question.

Hanuman felt that he was not competent to sit in judgement on the Lord’s words. “My duty is to carry out whatever Rama says,” “*Karthavyam Yogam Uchyathe*” (Duty is Yoga), says Gita. What is this yoga? “*Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam*” says Gita. Yoga is excellence in performance of duty. Hence you should embark on all actions in accordance with the Divine injunctions. Then alone you experience all kinds of knowledge. **(SSS Vol.28 p.277-278)**

There are in the world today millions of people who recite the Lord’s name. But while reciting the name, they do not realise the greatness and glory of the Divine name. When Hanuman entered Lanka, the land of Rakshasas the first friendly person he encountered was Vibhishana. All the Rakshasas in Lanka who had not seen a monkey, were curious to know all about the simian visitor. They asked him: “Who are you? Wherefrom have you come and at whose behest? How did you enter Lanka?” Hanuman was unruffled. He told them, “I am the servant of the Lord Kosala, Sri Rama,” though he was very powerful. This means also that in any situation one should remain calm and unperturbed. How is this tranquillity to be secured? When the heart is pure, peace is assured. Without purity of the heart peace is unattainable. Even if one appears to be at peace, it is only a pretence. When one has both purity of heart and peace of mind, one can achieve anything. There are three P’s. The first ‘P’ stands for purity. The second ‘P’ for patience. The third ‘P’ stands for perseverance. When these are present, one can acquire the grace of Sri Rama. This was amply demonstrated by Hanuman. **(SSS Vol.28 p.276-277)**

Anjaneya or Hanuman dedicated every moment of his life, every wave of thought, every twitch of muscle, to his Master, Rama. When Rama sent him in the southerly direction on the mission to search for Sita, he was neither elated on being thus recognised as an efficient instrument nor depressed as the dangerous nature of his task. He knew that Rama would confer on him the skill and strength needed to fulfil the errand; in fact all his skill and all his strength were 'His gifts' to feed that he was too weak an instrument was, he concluded, an insult to Rama's Omnipresence and Grace. (*SSS Vol.9 p.40-41*)

Hanuman³² was always engaged in the contemplation of Rama. Every hair on his body chanted the name of Rama. Hanuman is adored by devotees as an example of total devotion to the Lord. When some had doubts whether Hanuman could leap the ocean to search for Sita in Lanka, Hanuman told them that Rama had given him the task and He would also give him the strength to accomplish it. This absolute faith was the cause of his success. When people entertain doubts as to their capacity to carry out the tasks assigned to them by the Divine, they will be weak and powerless. Hence, to accomplish anything, firm faith is essential. Doubts have to be expelled. Everything that happens should be accepted as for one's own good. That is the means to qualify for God's grace. To go on speculating over Swami's words is an insane exercise. Hanuman exemplified complete freedom from doubts. He had only two desires. To be dear and near to Rama. Hanuman intensely yearned to be always near to Rama. He had no use for any object, however valuable, which did not proclaim the name of Rama. He threw away the pearl necklace presented to him by Sita because the pearls did not recite Rama's name. (Swami sang a ballad, in which Rama praised Hanuman as the greatest of devotees and embraced him). Rama declared: "Hanuman! No material object is fit enough to be given to you as a present. You live in the world of the Spirit. You have no attachment to the things of the world. Let you be present wherever my glory is sung." (*SSS Vol.28 p.280-281*)

Rama Chinthana

Hanuman can cool his heart with just *Ramachinthana* (contemplation of the divine name of Rama) (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.62-63*)

³² Hanuman had tears in his eyes and in the heart of Hanuman, there was nothing else except Rama's name and Rama's form (*SSB 1997 p.98*)

Great renunciation and devotion

Sita said: “Hanuman! It is not possible to satisfy you with wealth, gold, mansions and other such items. Even if I were to bring the three worlds and give it to you, I will not be able to repay my debt. You are such a great renunciator and devotee. Because of these two qualities, you can go around all the three worlds. Because of your travels, all the three worlds will be secure and prosperous.” *(SSB 1996 p. 104)*

Lord is a servant of His devotees. He is the final authority everywhere, except in the presence of His devotee! The Lord’s powers are benign to His devotees and devastating to wicked people. Hanuman’s life signified the same idea. Hanuman was humble in front of Rama but bold and terrible to Ravana. Virtue, faultless behaviour, renunciation – all these are merely facets of devotion. *(SSB 1995 p.54)*

He reveals the depth of Devotion

On the occasion of the Coronation of Sri Rama at Ayodhya, presents were given to the ministers and the distinguished visitors, collaborators and companions of Rama Vibhishana, Sugriva, Jambavan, Nala, Neela etc. Hanuman was not given any. Observing this, Sita, who had benefitted most by his selflessness and heroism, devotion and dedication, felt pained. She communicated her feelings to Rama who was beside her on the throne. *(SSS Vol.10 p.93-94)*

Rama gave a pearl necklace to Sita and wanted her to give away to whoever she liked and she gave to Hanuman who was pressing Rama’s feet and praised him thus: “You are the supreme devotee who faithfully carried out every command of Rama. You are the one who strained so much to search for me.” *(SSB 1996 p.97)*

Immediately, Hanuman took the pearls apart, and putting them one by one between his teeth, he bit each pearl and spat it out in disgust! Sita became flushed with anger. She whispered to Rama that Hanuman could not be but a monkey. *(SSS Vol.10 p.94)*

In order to show to the world the great devotion of Hanuman, Rama said: “Foolish One! Can there be Rama’s name resounding in the pearls?” (*SSB 1996 p.98*)

Hanuman replied, “O mother, I examined each pearl in order to see whether it had the sacred name of Rama in it. I could not find it in any pearl. Without the name of Rama, they are but stones and pebbles. So, I cast them on the ground. (*SSS Vol.33 p.133*)

Hanuman replied: “Not at all, O Rama! I am constantly immersed in the feeling of Rama. I repeatedly chant the name of and hear the name of Rama. Amongst the nine paths of devotion, this is most important to me. That is why I have become Your servant. The nine types of devotion are *Sravana* (listening), *Kirtanam* (singing), *Vishnusmaranam* (contemplating), *Padasevanam* (pressing the Lord’s feet), *Vandanam* (offering obeisance), *Archana* (worshipping), *Dasyam* (servitude), *Sneham* (friendship) and *Atmanivedanam* (offering oneself to the Lord). Hence, by qualifying to be Your servant, I have also become Your confidant, Without this servitude to You, I could not have become Your friend. After becoming Your friend, I am offering myself to You. I do not like to listen to anything other than the name of Rama. Therefore, I am listening intently to see if the name of Rama is resounding in these pearls.” (*SSB 1996 p.98*) Hanuman said, "I was only examining whether these pearls had Rama in them; I could not find anyone which had, so cast them away. If a thing has no Rama in it, it *is* to me as worthless as stone." (*SSS Vol.10 p.93-94*)

Such was the great devotion of Hanuman. That is the reason why he could become such a close confidant and trusted friend of Rama. Anybody may be far away, but Hanuman was never far away from Rama. Lakshmana, Bharatha, Shatrughna and even Sita were, at some time or the other, a little distant. But never was Hanuman away from Rama, even for an instant. What was the reason for this? It was constant chanting of Rama’s name and constant service of Rama which elevated Hanuman to lofty heights. He constantly served Rama with body, mind and soul. (*SSB 1996 p.98*)

Bhakthi (Devotion) is of three types – *Sadharana* (ordinary), *Madhyamika* (medium) and *Ananya* (one-pointed). Ordinary devotion is marked by ego.

Here the egoistic feeling ‘I’ dominates all actions and thoughts. The medium type of devotion is marked by the feeling, “I am in you; you are in me.” Ananya bhakthi is marked by the feeling, “You alone exist. I do not exist at all.” Hanuman one day said to Rama: “Oh Lord! When I think that I am the body, I am overcome by the feeling that I am Your servant. When I think that I am the individual self, I am overcome by the feeling that You are the object, and I am your reflection. When I know I am the Atma, then I feel that You and I are one.” Thus, Hanuman revealed the depths of his devotion. (**SSB 1996 p. 64**)

Next, about the third stage: “*Twam Eva Aham ithi thridhaa*”; this is the *Avibhaktha Bhakthi*, the inseparable devotion. The devotee offers all to the Lord, including himself, for he feels that he cannot withhold himself. That completes his surrender.

The Twam-Eva-Aham feeling is the Adwaitic (non-dualistic) Saranagathi (surrender), based on the realization that all this (*Idam*) is Vasudeva and nothing less, nothing else. So long as the consciousness of the *deha* or body persists, the *bhaktha* (devotee) is the servant and the Lord is Master. So long as the individual feels that he is separate from other individuals, the bhaktha is a part and the Lord is the Whole. When he progresses to the state when he gets beyond the limits of the body as well as of “I” and “Mine,” then, there is no more distinction; Bhaktha and Bhagawan are the same. In the *Ramayana*, Hanuman achieved this third stage through *Bhakthi* (devotion). (***Geetha Vahini p.23***)

Three sources of Power

Remember each person has three sources of power in him: as an individual, as a child of God and as a shrine where Atma is installed. Hanuman once told Rama, “When I feel I am this body You are my Lord; when I feel I am a distant Soul or Jiva, I know I am the reflection and You are the Original; when I know I am Atma, I know that I am You and You are I.”

Be ever in the consciousness that you are but the shadow of God, His image. Then, no harm can hamper you. God walks along the royal road of Truth; the shadow, holding on to Him, by the feet, falls on hollow and hill, fire and

water, dirt and dust. So, if you hold on to the feet, you can be unaffected, as the shadow by the ups and downs of life. (*SSS Vol. 6 p.260*)

Installed Rama in his heart – everything will be added

When Rama is installed in the heart, everything will be added unto you - fame, fortune, freedom, fullness. Hanuman was a mere monkey leader until he met Rama; he was a minister in the court of his master; but; when Rama gave him the commission to seek Sita and sent him, that is to say, when Rama was installed in his heart as guide and guardian, Hanuman became immortal, as the Ideal Devotee. (*SSS Vol.9 p.204*)

The Supreme Devotee

Sita asked Rama what reward He was going to give to Hanuman in this assembly. Rama said, “Sita, Hanuman would not like any ordinary reward. I know what he wants and I shall give.”

Bhakthi will force the Lord to give you, Himself as the Gift. The Coronation Ceremony and the celebrations were all over; the presentation of gifts to all important people was over. Then, Sita remembered that Maruthi (Hanuman) had been forgotten. There was no one in the Hall except Rama, Sita and Maruthi. Rama wondered what to give him; He suggested to Sita that the gemset ring that Janaka gave him on the occasion of the marriage would be best gift, because as He said, “Your father gave this to me, on the day he gave you to me; this Maruthi gave you to me, a second time. So, I shall give him this.” Maruthi did not seem to be quite happy when the ring was placed in his hand. Evidently, he did not appreciate the gift because it was not given in full sight of all; when all were given, he was neglected! But Maruthi placed near his ear, as if he sought to know what sound emanated from it; he bit it with his teeth; tried to peer into its structure.

Rama asked him why, and Sita was also anxious to know, Maruthi said, ‘I am finding out whether it has the Ramanama which I want to the exclusion of everything else.’ Then, Rama embraced him and said, “Maruthi! What other gift can I give you? I shall give you Myself as the gift. Accept Me!” (*SSS Vol.3 p 16*)

Then Rama got up, hugged Hanuman and said, “Hanuman! What boon can I give you? Nothing would be a worthy enough gift for you. (SSB 1996 p.98) This is what I want to give you as your reward. I am with you and you are with Me. We can never be separated. This bond of love between you and Me is eternal.” Hanuman was overjoyed. He said “I do not want anything except You. What more can I ask for? I am not interested in any wealth. Your name is my only treasure and Your form is my wealth.” Sita was also very happy to hear this (SSS Vol. 36 Part1 p.231)

Hanuman lost himself in Bliss³³ in this boon. The Ramayana is the holy text that has shown to the entire world the extraordinary and immense devotion of Hanuman. (SSB 1996 p.99)

So, that is why he was neglected, at the time everyone else was awarded gifts! That is why wherever Maruthi is, there, Rama is bound to be; wherever Rama is, there Maruthi invariably present. The Name is so valuable for the Bhaktha. It persuades the Form to bend and bless. (SSS Vol.3 p.16)

Here is a fine illustration of the devotion of Hanuman to Rama³⁴. Rama, the embodiment of Nivritti tendencies, arrived at the seashore on His mission to destroy Lanka, which was steeped in Pravritti. Evil tendencies like ignorance, egoism and pomp do not allow man to enter into the World of Nivritti, even though he may have intellectual eminence to his credit. Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Angada and Jambavan were making arrangements for the massive action to be launched against Lanka. He pretended as though he was tired and lay on the sands, resting His head on Lakshmana’s lap. It was the night of the full moon. He wished to impart a lesson in the Nivritti Marga to all those

³³ The state is also called *Nirvikalpa* Samadhi. What is this Samadhi? If we concentrate intently at an object for twelve seconds, it is called *Dharana*. Twelve such *Dharanas* make one *Dhyana*. Twelve such *Dhyana* make a *Samadhi*. This is the relation among the three states of *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*. Hanuman was instantly in the state of *Samadhi*. (SSB 1996 p.99)

³⁴ SSS Vol.10 p.92

present. *Suddenly, he threw a question as to why the moon had a mark on it and what that patch indicated*³⁵.

Meanwhile, Sugriva arrived there and heard Rama's words. He said, "O Rama! I see spots in the Moon. Since the Moon is part of Prakriti (Nature), it contains valleys, mountains and the like. These are visible as spots." **(SSB 1996 p.61)**

Each one ventured on an answer. Some said it was the shadow of the earth, some that it indicated a big hollow or crack on the surface of the moon, and some said it must be a huge heap of soil. **(SSS Vol.10 p.92)**

Rama then called Hanuman and asked the same question. Hanuman said:" O Ramachandra! I don't see any spot. I see only the reflection of Your face in the Moon. Since the Moon is like a mirror, Your face is reflected in the Moon." **(SSB 1996 p.61)** He had the unique fortune of visualising Rama in everything he cast his eyes on. **(SSS Vol.10 p.92)**

The answers given by Sugriva and Hanuman reveal their Pravritti and Nivritti tendencies respectively. **(SSB 1996 p.61)** What is the Nivritti Marga? The essence of the Nivritti lies in performing all deeds for the pleasure of the Lord. **(SSB 1996 p.66)**

Defines Devotion - Never give up:

Hanuman fought the battle, his mind absorbed in Rama. He exchanged spiritual ideas with Vibhishana very often, He said:

*Having grasped what out to be grasped,
Hold on till you succeed,
Having desired what ought to be desired,
Hold on till you succeed;
Having asked what ought to be asked,
Hold on till you succeed:
Having thought what ought to be thought,
Hold on till you succeed;
Disgusted with you, He should yield to you!*

³⁵ **SSS Vol.10 p.92**

When you ask , ask with fervour.

That is what a devotee should do.

A devotee should never accept defeat and go away, (SSB 1996 p.73)

Steadfastness and faith in God:

Was it beyond the power of Rama to discover Sita in Lanka Himself? What need was there for Him to send Hanuman? Rama wanted Hanuman to go on the search, so that He could show to the world the devotion and steadfastness and faith of Hanuman. It is a case of Grace on the part of Rama. In the same manner, if Sai so much as wants to do so many things Himself, He could do anything. This endeavour is not for the sake of Sai. It is done through these Seva Organisations so that members of the organisation get the chance to do service and redeem themselves. Try to understand the basic truth that these avenues of service have been provided so that you will get good name for yourselves and not for the sake of Sai. (SSS Vol.17 p.111)

At this, Agasthya, one of the renowned sages who was assembled in the hall, rose up and challenged Hanuman with the question, "Hanuman! You say that you *will* not wear or bear, eat or carry anything that does not sound of Rama. Well, you carry about this body, don't you? Does it sound of Rama to you?" Hanuman accepted the challenge. He pulled a single hair from his wrist and held it to the ear of the sage. Lo! It was reciting 'Rama, Rama', without interruption. Hanuman's loyalty and his devotion to all that belonged to his Master, was so deep and so sincere. That is the reason why he achieved success, whatever the assignment. (SSS Vol.10 p.94)

Sita started praising Hanuman thus:

You are the crest jewel among the monkeys

Who fulfilled Rama's mission.

You are the great hero who found the

Whereabouts of Sita and destroyed the city of Lanka. (Telugu Poem)

It can be said that but for Hanuman, Ramayana would not have existed. He is the embodiment of devotion and surrender. Hanuman is present wherever Rama's name is chanted. Rama's name and form are not different. Hanuman

experienced this unity. That is the principle of non – dualism. (*SSS Vol.33 p. 133*)

Service as worship to realise God

Hanuman is the supreme example of a devotee who practised service as the form of worship to realise God. His great acts in the service of Rama show how he was completely free from ego and how deep his devotion to Rama was at all times. (*SSS Vol.22 p.199*)

Seva is a small word but is filled with immense spiritual significance. Hanuman is the supreme exemplar of the ideal of service. When Rakshasas asked Hanuman, during his search for Sita in Lanka, who he was, he replied simply: “Daasoham Kosalendrasya”. He was content to describe himself as the humble servant of Rama. (*SSS Vol.18 p.11*)

The greatness of Hanuman was the symbol of selfless service. He was endowed with mighty power, valour, strength and he was hailed as a great scholar of impeccable character. Yet when the demons in Sri Lanka questioned him who he was, he never hesitated to reply that he was the servant of Sri Ramachandra. (*SSS Vol. 30 p.151*)

Hanuman was such a bhaktha; Rama was very life breath for him. After the coronation, one day, Sita and the three brothers of Rama met and planned to exclude Hanuman from the seva of Rama and wanted that all the various services for Rama should be divided among themselves. They felt that hanuman had had enough chance already. So, they drew up a list, as exhaustive as they could remember of the services from dawn till dusk, down to the smallest minutiae and assigned each item to one among themselves. They presented the list of items and assignees to the Lord, while Hanuman was present. Rama heard about the new procedure, read the list and gave His approval, with a smile. He told Hanuman that all tasks had been assigned to others and that he could now take rest. Hanuman prayed that the list might be read and when it was done, he noticed an omission – the task of ‘snapping fingers when one yawns.’³⁶ Of course, benign emperor, Rama should not be

³⁶ Hanuman pleaded that he might be given the duty of snapping his fingers whenever Rama yawned. The others agreed, for they thought that the

allowed to do it himself. It has to be done by a servant, he pleaded. Rama agreed to allot that to Hanuman!

It was a great piece of good luck for Hanuman, for it entitled Hanuman's constant attendance on the Master, for how could anyone predict when the yawn would come? And, he had to be looking on that heart-warming face all the time to be ready with the snap, as soon as the yawn was on! He could not be away for a minute nor could he relax for a moment. You should be happy that the seva of the Lord keeps you always in His presence and ever vigilant to carry on His behests. The Lord cares for ekagrata and chittasuddhi, concentration and clarity. You need not feel that you are physically away from Him. He has no 'near' and 'far.' (*SSS Vol.4 p.54-55*) Through *seva sadhana*, Hanuman attained identity with Rama, as the river attains identity with the sea. (*SSS Vol.15 p.165*)

No Ego

Take Hanuman as your example in seva. He served Rama, the Prince of Righteousness, regardless of obstacles of all types. Though he was strong, learned and virtuous, he had no trace of pride. When asked who he was by Rakshasas in Lanka into which he had entered so daringly, he described himself, in all humility, as the 'servant of Rama'. That is the ideal example of uprooting of the ego, which Seva must bring about in us. None can serve another while his ego is rampant. The attitudes mutual help and self-less service develop the 'humanness' of man and help the unfoldment of the divinity latent in him. (*SSS Vol.15 p.163-164*)

chances of Rama yawning would be very rare indeed. For Hanuman, however, it was a god send. For he was ever watching the face of Rama, his fingers ready, waiting for the chance of performing the rite that was his duty! This too was the Grace of Rama, for what can happen without His knowledge and His plan? Who can keep the devotee away from the presence of God? Rama demonstrated by this incident that no one can obstruct His wish and stand between His devotee and Himself. (*SSS Vol.10 p.95*)

His nobility

Hanuman was a great hero in the story of Ramayana. He led an army of Vanaras in his holy mission of searching for the whereabouts of Sita, who was kept in captivity in Lanka by Ravana. He was a very intelligent and faithful servant of Rama/ he was person of noble qualities and great physical strength. In his noble qualities and might, he was unparalleled, In fact, one whole chapter, namely, Sundara Kanda was devoted to describe his qualities of head and heart, in the Ramayana. (SSS Vol. 41 p 115-116)

Vibhishana used to praise Hanuman as *gunavantha* – highly virtuous, *Balavantha* – extremely strong and powerful and *Santha* – always calm and peaceful. Remember that like Hanuman, you too can derive strength and peace only through love and service, together with control of senses. (SSB 1990 p.113-114)

Lead an ideal life – no fickleness or wavering:

Hanuman is pictured as a monkey, and monkeys are nature, wayward and frolicsome. 'Monkeyish', has become a synonym for fickleness. But Hanuman did not have any of this fickleness. He was of Divine descent, and distinguished with the Divine qualities mentioned in the Gita. He derived Bliss in the contemplation of Rama. He had full mastery over physical and sensual cravings. He was shining in Atmic splendour. He had established his life on the foundations of *sathya* and *dharma*; and led his companions also on the same path, exercising the force of his example on them. (SSS Vol.10 p.92-93)

Lord Shiva's Amsa

No doubt Hanuman belonged to to the species of monkeys. But, it is a mistake to consider him as the embodiment of *chanchalathwa* (fickle mindedness). That is insulting a great devotee like Hanuman. He was *Easwaramsa Sambhutha* (one born with Lord Shiva's amsa or part) verily. He had divinity in him undoubtedly. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.68*)

Hanuman was one who was at all times immersed in the spiritual and sacred name of Rama. For, as to think that Hanuman belonged to the tribe of monkeys and that Hanuman had a very wavering mind is very wrong. Hanuman was the embodiment of the aspect of Iswara. If such divinity comes

together with another aspect of divinity, there is no doubt of redoubled strength. (*SSB 1977 p.99*)

Hanuman was intoxicated by his devotion to Rama and was always in a state of ecstasy in chanting Rama's name. He was all humility in the presence of Rama. He was utterly fearless before Ravana. Before the Divine he was a suppliant. Before a Rakshasa he was a hero. Hanuman knew how to conduct himself in any situation. He was supremely intelligent. He stands out as ideal for mankind. (*SSS Vol.28 p.281*)

Sugriva and Hanuman saw that Rama and Lakshmana were coming in their direction while searching for Sita. However, Sugriva felt that Rama and Lakshmana were messengers of Vali coming to spy on him, and do him harm. On the contrary, Hanuman, because of his very great good quality and peace of mind, told Sugriva not to be agitated, and that he would go and find out who those people were and report back. He advised that whatever we wish to do, we should never be in haste. Haste is not the right natural quality of one's own mind. Haste always leads to waste, waste always causes worry and therefore, one should not be in a hurry. Hanuman was well acquainted with these maxims and so he did not make haste. (*SSB 1997 p.94*)

Treated Women as his Mother:

Hanuman, who discovered Sita and conveyed to her the message of hope and the assurance of hope, managed to enter the Audience Hall of Ravana. He revealed to him that Sita was the Mother of all the worlds and his own mother. He described the might and majesty of God in the Rama form and drew ominous pictures of the destruction that was in store for Ravana. He advised him to restore Sita and surrender to Rama. He said that eternal disgrace was the fate of everyone who thrusts his ego forward and keeps God behind, beyond consideration. (*SSS Vol.18 p.88-89*)

Women can be compared with Mother of creation. We call our country motherland; we do not call it fatherland. Here, Hanuman is teaching young people how they should treat women as mother. This kind of attitude is very essential for young people today. It is only when we promote such qualities amongst us that we will be able to resuscitate the glorious culture of Bharat. If

we have no good quality, our entire life becomes useless. For the good of the world, people with good qualities are very necessary. (*SSB 1977 p.97*)

He never submitted to Lust:

Of the three gunas, *satwa* (the balanced), *rajas* (the passionate) and *tamas* (the dull), *rajas* is the quality to be watched carefully, for its first progeny is *kama* or lust. Lust destroyed Ravana, who was a great scholar, warrior, emperor and a mighty hero. It can overwhelm and neutralise every good quality in man, and reduce him to the level of a beast. Anger is the second among the progeny of this quality. Anger can seize the treasure chest of wisdom from your grasp and break it to smithereens. It is usually compared with fire, *anala*, which literally means, 'not enough'. It always relishes more and more fuel, to feed its limitless hunger. Hanuman had no lust. His anger was not of the 'not- enough' variety. In order to search for Sita, Hanuman had to enter the women's apartments in the palace of Ravana to look into the faces of the sleeping women, and compare their features, with Rama's description of Sita. (*SSS Vol.10 p.93*)

The quality of lust has no satisfaction under any circumstances. The quality of lust has been compared with fire. Fire has also another name called *Anala*. *Anala* means something which has no sufficiency at any time and which is insatiable. The meaning of this is, however much you say may experience and enjoy, there is no satisfaction. You will always want more and more. As you put more and more fuel into the fire, the fire goes on increasing. The fire can never be extinguished by adding fuel. In the same manner by your trying to satisfy your desires, the desire will go on increasing. They will never decrease by satisfaction and appeasement. Without submitting to this kind of lust Hanuman earned the grace of Rama. (*SSB 1977 p.103*)

While he was embarking on his holy mission of finding Sita in the City of Lanka, he was given certain identification clues about Sita. He was told that Sita was a woman of noble qualities and divine beauty and that she would not mix with the Rakshasa ladies. He searched for Sita in every nook and corner of Lanka, including the inner chambers of the palace where Ravana's queens and ladies attending on them stayed. During his search he came across ladies scantily dressed and fallen on their beds, intoxicated by drink and dance. But, he was totally unmoved by these obscene forms, keeping always in his mind

the characteristics and excellence of Sita that Rama had described to him earlier. His supreme stability of mind in such an environment befitted his true *Brahmachari* (celibate) status. One cannot find parallels to Lord Rama and His noble servant Hanuman, in this world. They are both Unique. (*SSS Vol. 41 p.116*)

He was looking for those features among several women. He was looking at the eyes and ears of women who were in the king's apartments with a view to see if the features given to by Ramachandra could be found in the eyes and ears of those women. But after some time he found some disgust in his own mind. He came to banks of the ocean. When he came to the ocean, he told himself how much sin he should have committed by having to look at faces of all those women. Having looked at the faces of so many women, he was wondering how could he go back to Ramachandra. He preferred to commit suicide by drowning himself in the ocean rather go back to Ramachandra. For some time he thought of the sacred name of Rama and purified his own mind. Recognising that was present as the self, as atma, in everybody, if he committed suicide, it will be committing suicide of his own self, of Rama as the atma, he satisfied himself by thinking that he was only obeying the orders of Rama when he entered Lanka. He had the courage to make such a decision that all things done by him only to obey the orders of Rama will never hurt him. He was such a clear-headed person that he was quite sure that if he obeyed Rama's orders, he will not have committed any sin. (*SSB 1977 p.103-104*)

But consoling himself that it was after all the order of Rama that he was obeying, he returned to continue the search. He considered every woman as his own mother, and thus searched where his mother was, not where Sita was. This is a good lesson for the youth of today. (*SSS Vol.10 p.93*)

It is necessary for the young people of today to recognise and understand the path taken by Hanuman so that no faults could be pointed out of the work they do. When he looked at a woman, the feeling in him was her being his mother. He asked himself the question, could this lady be my mother Sita? This was how he was looking at any women. It is the sacred idea in the mind of Hanuman that kept him away from all sins. (*SSB 1977 p.104*)

Innocence:

Hanuman was a very innocent person. He had no deceit in him. Today human beings are covered by considerable amount of deceit. We think such people are very clever people. One who takes to the path of truth and one who does not know how to practise is an innocent person. (*SSB 1977 p.109*) Once Sri Rama's Birthday was being celebrated, Kausalya prepared many delicious sweets and distributed them all. She invited many persons for the function and distributed gifts to them. On this occasion Kausalya applied vermilion on the forehead of Sita. Then Sita went with Rama to their room. Hanuman also wanted to follow Rama. But Kausalya told him not to enter the room of Rama. She said, Sita with vermilion mark had the right to enter Rama's room but Hanuman had no right to do so. At this, Hanuman got angry, went to the bazaar, bought a lot of vermilion and smeared it on his body. He then exclaimed, "When Mother Sita with a little vermilion on her forehead can enter Rama's room, why not I with so much of vermilion?" Hanuman's devotion was full of innocence and sacredness. People had very sacred feelings in ancient days. We do not find such sacred feelings in people of today. But past is past. You cannot get back that type of time. Without bothering about the future, you should make the best use of your present. Whatever you have got today, you have to maintain. (*SSS Vol. 36 Part I p.231-232*)

Means of self-realisation:

Search for the Lord as Hanuman searched for Sita. He had not even seen her; he had only heard her being described. He could also judge what she should be like, if Rama could aspire for her so deep. It was like the attachment of Purusha for Prakriti, no less... Like Hanuman, man too should seek the incomprehensible Adi-Sakti, among the multifarious counter- attractions and distractions of Lanka. (*SSB 1996 p. 56*) Since the entity is not known, one has to discover it by means of the characteristics it is supposed to have. The experience of sages is the only guide, the only map or chart. The chart is supplied by the Bhagavata, the Ramayana, the Puranas. Have the Lokamata, the Tripurasundari in your heart. Her lineaments clear and pure; then proceed bravely into the land of Rakshasas; and you will succeed. Saturate yourself in the search; establish yourself in the faith; then, you can fill yourself with the Bliss. Who can describe the signs of the Sita you seek to find? Only Rama can, for He is the Master. Take Him as the truest guide. The Vedas are like

that; Lakshmana, Sugriva and the rest are as the Sastras, arguing by deduction, not from actual mastery. They did not describe Sita; they could not, for they had not seen. (*SSS Vol.4 p.19*)

He is a Dheera

Hanuman by contemplating on Rama incessantly became a Dheera. He displayed this quality of courageousness in the court of Ravana. But the same hanuman stood like a *Deena* (humble one) in Rama's presence. This drives home the point that one should be a *Deena* (humble one) in front of divinity and *Dheera* (courageous one) in the face of evil. (*SSS Vol. 32 Part I p. 106*)

Humility and Dharma

Hanuman sets an example to all of us by the manner in which he conducts himself. When he comes close to Rama, he shows extreme humility and respect. What is the reason for Hanuman exhibiting such humility in the presence of Rama? The reason for such behaviour lies in the description of "*Ramo Vighrahan Dharmah*" of Rama. Rama is the embodiment of *dharma* and therefore in the presence of *dharma*, he shows humility. The same Hanuman, when he went to Lanka, had put himself on a pedestal higher than that of Ravana because Ravana asked him to squat on the floor like a monkey. The reason for this is that while in the presence of *dharma*³⁷, Hanuman is humble and obedient, but in the presence of an arrogant king, he would not show any humility. (*SSB 1973 p.169*)

He was a messenger:

Hanuman became the messenger³⁸ of Rama. There are three classes of messengers: those who do not understand the orders of the master or do not

³⁷ In the same manner, you should bow down to *dharma*, and show respect to teachers and elders. On the other hand you should show courage and prudence when placed in a predicament which is *adharmic*. Even then, you should not take to anarchic methods. (*SSB 1973 p.169*)

³⁸ Amongst messengers, there are three kinds of messengers. The first kind are those who take the orders of the Lord, will not obey Him, but will take such actions as will go contrary to the wishes of the Lord. The second kind are those who will take literally what the Lord has said and will follow them without either adding something or taking away

care to understand, and who operate to the detriment of the work assigned them; those who do only just as much as the order literally communicates; and those who grasp the background and significance of the orders and carry them out to the full, until the purpose is achieved. Hanuman belonged to the last and the best category. He never flinched in his efforts, whatever the obstacle, and reported back only after his conscience was satisfied with the result of his assignment. He could delve into the commands of Rama and know what his order meant. As soon as he received the order, he felt a thrust of power inside him and a new confidence that, since he had been so ordered, the strength and intelligence, the audacity and the adventurous spirit needed will be granted by Rama himself. So, he never had any qualms about his capacity or capability. His body and spirit were vitalised by the very fact that Rama asked him to do something. An electric wire has a copper wire inside its plastic coating; for good operation, both must be of high quality. So, too, the body and the spirit within, have both to be in good trim, and Rama's words made them both efficient and active. (*SSS Vol.10 p.91*)

Born to Serve as His Instruments

All the Vanara soldiers who died in the war were resurrected by Rama and gathered around Him. Even the demons who were killed had the golden opportunity of the divine darshan of Rama before they breathed their last. To the vanaras, Sri Rama granted a boon. “You are born to serve as instruments in My Avataric mission, hence you become immortal. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.34*)

something. The results of such work will be accepted and will be carried back to the Lord. The third kind are those who will take the wishes of the Master and will perform the task in such a way that the wishes will be completely and at all costs fulfilled. He will become victorious and take back to the Master the message of victory. Rama and Lakshmana told each other that Hanuman is the third kind of friend who will see that the Master's orders are taken to a stage which will ensure victory. Truly, Hanuman at all times, would only think of Rama and in the thought of Rama, he would not allow anything else to enter his mind. Because Hanuman knew very well the power and strength of Rama, he was always following the footsteps of Rama. (*SSB 1997 p.106*)

Adhered the Middle Path – not elated nor dejected

A sevak must be neither elated nor dejected; he must adhere to the middle path. When Rama asked Hanuman to proceed towards the Southern region and described the dangers of the route, he was not dejected; when He gave him the ring to be handed over to Sita; he was not elated that he had been chosen for the supreme task and given the glorious chance. He just obeyed. Sufficient unto him was the order of his Master, “GO”. Hanuman is the ideal volunteer, efficient, humble, silent, serviceable, intelligent, eager and devoted. (SSS Vol.5 p.337)

Form of an ape -an outer casement the upadhi

You feel that there is something behind and beyond all this fleeting fantasy; something that persists through all the success and defeats, all the tears and smiles, all this mirth and moan; but you are unable to grasp it and realise that it is the same entity that underlies the entire Universe. You are one with the most distant star and the least little blade of grass. You shine as dew on the petal of the rose; you swing from star to star; you are part and parcel of all the manifestation. The Sastras teach you this truth, through many a parable and story, and even directly, supported by the experience of sages and mystics. Hanuman may have a form of an ape; but that is simply the outer casement, the upadhi. The Lord is the very breath of Hanuman; every hair – end of his was echoing with Ramanama. Through dhyana and upasana you can be aware of yourselves, as all this. (SSS Vol.4 p.125)

The Mystery and Secret of Careers of Rama and Sita

On the day when Rama was crowned Emperor at Ayodhya, every personage got some present or the other before leaving the city. Hanuman alone refused any material gift. He asked Rama to explain to him the mystery of His Life, which he had failed to understand in spite of the length and loyalty of his service. Rama then asked Sita to slake the thirst of Hanuman and reveal to him the secret of their careers. Sita announced that she was the *Mula Prakriti*, the Primal Nature, the Maya Sakthi, the Energy which agitates in all Matter, which is Matter, which transforms and transmutes it into all this variety that binds and blinds; the Ramayana, she said was nothing but the play she designed. Rama is the Eternal, Unchanging, Purusha. The Atma in every being is Rama; hence the name Atmarama. Rama is eternal and so the Rama

manthram is said to have been taken by Siva Himself. Rama means that which showers Ananda that is all. Now what can give greater than the Atma? Rama is Anandam and He is Atmarama, the Anandam in your inner Consciousness. You can understand the Ramayana only if you keep this aspect in view. Orange has a form and a name; when you squeeze it and take the juice, the form and the name, orange too is gone. The taste alone remains. The sweetness, the flavour, the essence, these alone are experienced. It cannot be exactly described. It is beyond any vocabulary. Hanuman understood from Sita the formless, nameless, sweetness of Rama. *(SSS Vol.2 p.40-41)*

Vision of Lakshmi

Rama sent Hanuman to Sita and requested him to bring Sita to the camp, in a palanquin. Hanuman bowed before Sita and got a vision of Lakshmi rising out of the waves of the ocean of milk. He felt that Vision was enough compensation for all the births he had to undergo. While the palanquin neared the camp, there spread everywhere a sublime splendour from it, which astonished the Vanara hordes. Rama sent word that Sita might alight and walk the remaining distance, so that they may fill their eyes with her glory This is not mentioned in the books. *(SSS Vol.4 p.15-16)*

HANUMAN AND ARJUNA:

When Arjuna went to South on a conquering expedition, on his coming to Ramasethu, where Rama had built the bridge to go over to Lanka, he was puffed with pride at his unrivalled skill with the bow; he felt that he was superior even to Rama, for Rama had piled it up laboriously, stone upon stone. Arjuna said rather aloud. "If I were he, I would have twanged my bow and built an arch of arrow the sea over which the army could have marched safely along." Hanuman surprised him by presenting himself before him and with a grin, which Arjuna felt made him even uglier. He challenged him to build one, so that one monkey could walk across not to speak of the vast host. Arjuna shot arrows one after another and they got entangled one with the other in such strong combinations that a huge structure was formed, bridging India and Lanka. Hanuman declared that it was too fragile; Arjuna agreed to immolate himself if the bridge could not stand his weight. Then, Hanuman walked a few paces on the bridge.... it crumbled into bits.

True to his word, Arjuna lit a fire and was about to expiate for the sin of pride that made him feel superior to Rama, when Krishna appeared and asked the reason, as if he did not know. In fact, that was the very reason why he appeared! When he was told of the wager and the failure of Arjuna, he declared that any agreement can be valid only when it was made before a witness. How the parties be trusted, since it was in their interest to modify the conditions to their advantage.

So, He wanted the bridge to be built again and Hanuman to break it again. It was done and Hanuman walked on it as before; but try as he might with all his might, the bridge was absolutely intact! Hanuman jumped on it, but, not a dent was caused. The secret was that Krishna was supporting the bridge on His back wherever hanuman's steps were placed, the same back that held Mandara Mountain in position, during the epoch-making churning of the ocean of milk by the gods and asuras. This was revealed to both Arjuna and Hanuman, by the bleeding that was evident on Krishna's back! The Lord interceded to save the honour of His Bhaktha! (*SSS Vol.4 p114-115*)

Arjuna's pride was humbled; he fell at the feet of Hanuman and prayed³⁹ that he must help him win the battle. Hanuman agreed to be present on the flag of Arjuna's chariot, shedding his halo over the warrior within. That was how the Treta Yuga wish was fulfilled and Treta Yuga mantra proved effective. This relationship with the past is beyond the reach of human investigation⁴⁰. (*SSS Vol.4 p.114-115*)

³⁹ Arjuna prayed to Anjaneya to fight on his side at Kurushetra; but Anjaneya said that the Kaurava army would be too infinitesimal a foe for his prowess; it would not be fair to pit him against such a weak enemy; he would only watch the fight, from the flag of Arjuna's chariot, he said; and the offer was gladly accepted. (*SSS Vol.4 p.58*)

⁴⁰ There used to be a king by name Vijaya in Tretha Yuga. His capital was Chandragopalapuram. He established truth, morality and peace on a firm basis in his kingdom and earned a great name for himself. He was a very kind and sympathetic towards poor and forlorn. Once, he had a strong desire to occupy his neighbouring kingdoms and extend his empire. Even his Guru, Sage Garga consented to his proposal. In the hope he would not violate the norms laid down in the Sastras while extending his empire, He initiated Vijaya to a mantra that would help him in fulfilling

Hanuman's greatness

Hanuman is the brightest example of such a realised soul. When he first presented himself before Rama and offered his services, Rama turned to Lakshmana and said, "Brother! Listen! Notice how Hanuman has mastered the *Vedas*. His speech is saturated with the humility and dedication which the *Rig' Veda* embodies, the retentiveness and reverence that the *Yajur Veda* promotes and the intuitive vision that the *Sama Veda* grants. Hanuman knows all the scriptural texts. He is a genuine devotee. Sugriva is fortunate to have him as his minister, Hanuman, whose thoughts, words and deeds are offered to God." When these three are in perfect harmony, the person wins the Grace of God, as Hanuman succeeded in securing. (*SSS Vol.19 p.71*)

***Dasyam* (service):**

Hanuman is the great exemplar of this type of devotion. Concentrating on the name of Rama and rendering service to Rama were Hanuman's preoccupation all the time. He was no ordinary being. He was a master of the 64 sciences and arts. Rama described him as a hero of peace, who possessed immense strength and wisdom. In everything he handled, Hanuman would examine whether it had Rama's name on it. If it was not there, he would discard even a precious gem as a useless piece of stone. While building the bridge to Lanka, Hanuman hurled rocks into the sea uttering the name of Rama and they rose to the surface. The letters "*Ra*" and "*Ma*" were written on separate stones and when they were thrown into the sea they joined together on the surface and thus the bridge was formed. Each hair of Hanuman was echoing the name of Rama. He was a devotee who remembered Rama at all times, whether in joy or sorrow. He had no sense of ego. He had given up all feeling of "mine" and "thine." When the *rakshasas* asked him in Lanka who he was, he firmly

his ambition. The moment Emperor Vijaya chanted, Hanuman, Jambavan and Sugriva appeared before him and said "please give us your orders". Vijaya told them "I have a desire to extend my empire to the four corners of the world. I will not be rested until I achieve my goal." Hanuman and his associates informed him, "this is impossible. You may go home. However you will be able to realise your ambition in Dwapara Yuga." Emperor Vijaya returned to his palace. The same Vijaya was reborn as Arjuna, the Mahabharata war hero. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.71*)

declared: "I am a *dasa* of the Lord of Kosala (Rama)." In all situations he described himself as a servant of Rama. (*SSS Vol.19 p.177-178*)

Love Principle

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*)

Devotees should install Rama in their hearts and celebrate Ramanavami for achieving Atmic bliss. Going through the Ramayana epic they should reach the state of "Atma Rama" (oneness with the universal spirit). In such a state there is no Ahamkara (ego sense). (*Divine Discourse: Apr 7, 1987*)

Hanuman was a married person

Hanuman was a married person. His wife's name is Suvarchala. Though he was married, he was a Brahmachari literally. He used to be constantly engrossed in the contemplation of the divine name of Rama. He was always thinking of god only, that is, he was engaged in *Brahmacharya* (constant contemplation of Brahman, the universal soul). (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.68*)

Siva Linga Installation

Rama and Lakshmana were going to the sacred town Rameswaram to install a Sivalinga there to promote the penance of Namasmarana (contemplation on the Divine name) among people, in one way or the other.... Hanuman was particularly attached to the name 'Rama'. Sri Rama explained to him that Divinity, by whatever name and form is worshipped, is only one; However, Hanuman did not like any other name. Even then, Rama particularly chose Hanuman to fetch the Siva linga for installation in Rameswaram. He chose

only the one who was not very keen to undertake such work. Rama called Hanuman and told him: Hanuman! You go to such and such mountain and bring a Siva lingam for installation here.” Rama also cautioned him that the work must be completed before the specific time. Hanuman did not show much interest in that assignment. Nevertheless, he went to that place and brought a Siva lingam. But, he came late by 10 minutes. Meanwhile, Sri Rama prepared the lingam with sand and installed it at the specified moment. Hanuman was upset that the lingam brought by him was not installed in spite of his undertaking so much trouble in the assignment. No doubt he was a great devotee of Rama, but he was disappointed and kept it aside. A trace of ego also entered in him. He wanted to test his devotion to Rama to know whether there was any short coming in it. He did not rest in peace till it was established that his devotion to Rama was unparalleled. He pulled a few hairs from his body and put them near his ear. Each hair was chanting Ramanama! He was then satisfied of his intense devotion to Rama. Sri Rama wanted to test him. God tests His devotees. For Him, it is part of divine leela. God feels happy in subjecting His devotees to a test.

As Rama was walking later, He fell down as though His Feet hit a small stone. It was all a drama. Lakshmana was following Him. He enquired ‘Dear elder brother! What happened?’ ‘Nothing! A small stone struck My feet. Hanuman arrived on the scene and said “This stone is an obstruction to people walking in this path. I will remove it. Rama counselled him, “Hanuman! You have lifted mighty Sanjivi mountain. It does not behove of a person like you to keep your eyes on this small pebble. Leave it. You do not worry. Next time, I will be more careful.” Hanuman however, insisted on removing that small stone. This tendency was born out of his birth as a vanara. The vanaras are notorious for *chanchalathwa* (fickle mindedness). He tried to remove that small stone with his left hand. But, he could not. Then, he tried to do it with both hands with all his might. The stone did not move an inch even. He was surprised and thought to himself ‘Oh! Rama! What great leela of Yours!’” Then Rama advised him not to trouble himself and pushed the stone with his little finger of His left foot. The stone lifted itself and fell at a distance. What is this stone anyway? It was the same linga brought by Hanuman as per the instructions of Sri Rama. Immediately a divine flame emerged from the stone and merged in Rama. Thus, it amply demonstrated that both Rama and Siva represent the same Divinity. Siva rides the bull and Lord Narayana rides the

Garuda. The same Narayana incarnated as Sri Rama Avatar. Sri Rama advised Hanuman to realise this Truth. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.27-29*)

Hanuman killed the following:

1. Hanuman killed Akshayakumara⁴¹ (RKRV Part II p.145/146)
2. Hanuman killed Ahi-Ravana⁴² - (RKRV part II p.243/244)
3. Hanuman killed Narantaka⁴³ - (RKRV Part II p.247/248)
4. Hanuman kills Dhoomraksha and Mahodara⁴⁴

⁴¹ See Chapter, *Lesser Known Sons Of Ravana*

⁴² See Chapter, *Ahi-Ravana*

⁴³ See Chapter, *Lesser Known Sons Of Ravana*

⁴⁴ See **Hanuman kills Dhoomraksha and Mahodara** in this chapter above

Interesting Incident

When this body was seven years old, an interesting incident had happened. The month of Magha had commenced. I told the group of children around Me ‘Look! The holy bath taken in the month of Magha is very sacred. It is not enough if you simply do Maghasnana. You must also undertake circumambulation of a temple.’ Accordingly, Myself and the group of children around Me used to visit the Anjaneya Temple as early as 4 O’ Clock in the morning. There used to be big lake behind the Anjaneya Swami Temple. We used to take our early morning bath in that lake. However, the small children could not get up from bed so early. Hence, I used to lift them up, take them to the lake and bathe them, personally. After taking bath we used to go to the temple. Once, all of us went to the temple. I told the children in the temple “You perform circumambulation to Anjaneya Swami and come back. I will stay here.” However, they discussed among themselves, “Why not Raju accompany us? He taught us so many things. Without Him, we cannot undertake any work. Hence, He should lead us and we must follow.” Having made such a resolve, they came running to Me and said “Raju! you must accompany us.” I informed them, “I will certainly come. Before that, But you go and finish your circumambulation.” The boys were insistent that I should accompany them. They firmly told Me, that unless you come, we will not go.” I tried to divert their attention saying that I have pain in My legs. The boys persisted “We will lift you and carry you physically and carry you on our shoulders.” When they were pressurizing Me so lovingly, I could not say no. I, therefore, started doing circumambulation to the Anjaneya Temple, along with them. Believe it or not! A big monkey suddenly appeared from nowhere and stood in front of Me, obstructing My movement.. The children around Me wondered “We did not see such a big monkey in this village, From where did it come! They tried their best to drive it away; but it did not move. Who is that monkey! It was Hanuman, the servant of Lord Rama, verily! They could not believe it. Hanuman himself had come in the form of that monkey and prayed “Swami! I am the one who had to do circumambulation to you. You should not do it for me.” I informed the children that Hanuman did not like My circumambulation to him. Hence, I will give it up. From that day onwards, a lot of transformation had taken place in the children. They experienced divine feelings. While returning home from the temple, they informed everybody “Today, when Raju was performing circumambulation in the Hanuman Temple along with us, a big monkey appeared from nowhere and stood in front of Him, preventing him from doing circumambulation. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.73-74*)

10.2 SUGRIVA



Figure 4: Rama meets Sugriva

Source of the Photo

Artist 1. Ramachandra Madhwa Mahishi,
2. Illustrated by Balasaheb Pandit Pant Pratinidhi

Title Rama Meets Sugreeva

Date 1912 (author dead before 1952 (April 13, 1951

Source 1. Chitra Ramayana

http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/mythology/ramayan/vali_and_sugreeva.htm

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SUGRIVA

In the Hindu epic Ramayana, Sugriva⁴⁵ was the younger brother of Bali, whom he succeeded as ruler of the Vanara or monkey kingdom Kishkindha. Ruma was his wife. He was the son of Surya, the Hindu deity of the sun. As king of the monkeys, Sugriva aided Rama in his quest to liberate his wife Sita from captivity at the hands of the Rakshasa king Ravana.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

SUGRIVA: Monkey-king, brother of Vali; with his army of monkeys headed by Hanuman, assisted Rama in defeating Ravana. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Chronicle of origins and fortunes of Sugriva's entire Clan:

Once upon a time, Brahma, the Creator, created a monkey form. It was endowed with great might; but, it was ever wayward in movements and activities. So Brahma named it Ruksharaja. When it demanded to be told where it should reside, Brahma directed, 'Live in the forest, for there you can move as your

⁴⁵ Also spelled as Sugreeva or Sugreev

waywardness dictates. And when you catch a Rakshasa, kill him and save the area from his misdeeds. Ruksharaja migrated to the southern region, and followed Brahma's instructions. One day, the monkey Ruksharaja went to a lake to slake its thirst and when it dipped its face on the surface of the clear water, it saw its image in the lake. It was much concerned, for evidently there was an enemy hiding in the lake, lying in wait for him! It roamed all-round the shore of the lake, eager to catch the enemy when it popped out of the waters. The enemy inside the lake roared when he roared, gnashed its teeth when he did so. It echoed, reflected, all noise and all gestures. Unable to control himself any longer, Ruksharaja jumped into the lake to strangle his rival. That jump transformed him into a female! Struck with amazement, she came on shore; and turning to the Sun, she prayed for Grace. She also prayed to Indra, with great mental anguish. Through the Grace of Surya (the Sun) she got a son, that is, Sugriva, myself; and through the Grace that Indra bestowed on her, she got another son, Vali, my brother. Immediately after the birth of the two children, she became once again, Ruksharaja! Ruksharaja took the two babies with him and approached Brahma for instructions. He related to Brahma his entire story so that He could recollect the facts of his decision thus: "Oh Vali and Sugriva! Go into the regions of the South and establish yourselves in Kishkindha. The Lord of all the Worlds, the Supreme Sovereign of the Universe, He who is known by many Names will take birth as Rama, as the son of Emperor Dasaratha of Raghu Dynasty. He will come into the forest according to his father's command. He will engage himself in many superhuman achievements. He will also behave like an ordinary mortal. During his wanderings, he will arrive at Kishkindha, where you

are, and form friendship with you. Seek the fortune of securing his darsan, hearing him speak and touching his feet. Your lives will be rendered blessed thereby.”

“We listened to the Voice of Brahma addressing us thus. We were delighted at the prospect that lay before us. We did not undertake any *japa*, austerity, ritual or *yajna*. All our talents and accomplishments were the direct result of the Grace that Brahma showered on us that day. When that Voice ceased, we offered homage in our minds to Brahma and reached Kishkindha. We destroyed the rakshasas who infested the forests there. (*RKRV Part II p.85-87*)

Sabari directs Rama and Lakshmana to meet Sugriva

While dying, Sabari⁴⁶ directed Rama to move in northern direction, to meet Sugriva at mountain Rishyamuka. From mountain-top Sugriva observed them approaching and wondered whether they were sent by Vali, his enemy. He then sent Hanuman, his minister, to know about the identity of these two visitors. (*SSB 1996 p.54*)

The brothers – Vali and Sugriva:

Vali and Sugriva - they too were brothers but both had to undergo suffering on account of lack of unity. (*SSB 2000 p.81*) In every human relationship, there should be balance and parity. At one time, the brothers Vali and Sugriva were inseparable; but enmity developed and they parted company. While Vali

⁴⁶ See Chapter, *Sabari*

remained in his place, Sugriva hid himself in the mountains to avoid Vali's wrath. Sugriva was all the time wondering how he could overcome his brother, now his enemy. Vali was very strong and powerful and could be defeated only by one who was more powerful than him. Sugriva consulted his companion Hanuman for advice and the latter suggested that Sugriva should be patient; time would show the way. (*SSB 2000 p.122*)

Sugriva meets Rama and Lakshmana:

During their wanderings in the forest in search of clues about Sita, Rama and Lakshmana arrived at the Rishyamuka Mountain, where they rested awhile in a shady glen. They were sad in mind and weak in physique. (*SSS Vol.11 p.90*)

One day, while Sugriva and Hanuman were wandering in the hills, they spotted two people in the distance. There was an extraordinary radiance about them. It appeared as if they had descended from the very Heavens. (*SSB 2000 p.122*)

Sugriva was ever on the watch for strange faces nearing his habitat, for he was afraid, his elder brother, Vali, might torment him, even in his present home, by sending emissaries of death or distress. He had his eyes on all lines of access to his craggy residence. He was frightened at the gait and the glory of the two strangers. He was anxious to know quickly who they were and what their mission was. So He called Hanuman to his presence and said, "Mighty hero! Have you noticed those two effulgent personalities? Do not delay any longer, go. Inquire who they are and why they have come and from where. Bring me all the news you can gather. If by some chance they happen to be persons sent

by Vali⁴⁷, give me a signal. I shall be watching for it—bend your head low over your chest. That will do. I shall immediately arrange to give up this hill for another.” Sugriva gave him various directions and suggestions to meet all contingencies. (**RKRV Part II p.79-80**)

Sugriva asked Hanuman to investigate and ascertain who those two were. (Sugriva feared that they might be the emissaries of his brother, Vali, who had sworn eternal vengeance upon him. Or, he thought, they may be his spies moving about incognito⁴⁸. Clearly, Sugriva’s observation was a reflection of his inner fear; otherwise, how could he have made such a statement, considering that the strangers had a distinct divine aura about them? Hanuman replied, “To me these two look divine. Anyway, I shall go and investigate (*and return with correct information about their identity and intentions.*” He advised that jumping to conclusions without sufficient information is fraught with danger^{49 50}. Coming down from the mountain, Hanuman approached the two effulgent strangers (**SSB 2000 p.122-123**)

Hanuman disguised himself like a Brahmin and met Rama and Lakshmana. Hanuman’s speech was cultured and gentle. He introduced himself as a Minister of Sugriva and volunteered to carry them on his shoulders and take them to Sugriva. There ensued a beautiful conversation between Rama and Hanuman in Sanskrit. (**SSB 2002 p.103**)

⁴⁷ Vali’s agents who have come in disguise (**SSB 2000 p.122**)

⁴⁸ **SSS Vol.10 p.90**

⁴⁹ **ibid**

⁵⁰ Sugriva is fortunate to have Hanuman, a Scholar and Great Devotee: as his minister. (**SSS Vol.19 p.71**)

Hanuman said, “Lord, Sugriva, the Ruler of the Vanara hordes, has drawn upon himself through various circumstances, the enmity of his elder brother Vali and he has been driven out of the kingdom as an exile into this forest where he has taken residence. He too is your servant. He deserves your affection and blessings. Confer Grace on him and release him from the disgrace he is now immersed in. He has the capacity and authority to send millions of monkeys all over the world to seek and find Sita. He is the Monarch of Monkeys. He can achieve victory in that undertaking.” Hanuman detailed the manifold excellences and capabilities of Sugriva, and persuaded Rama to seek his friendship. (*RKRV Part II p.82*)

Rama understood from the conversation that Vali was unjust towards Sugriva. Vali had appropriated the kingdom from Sugriva and had driven him out of Kishkindha. He accused Sugriva of criminal conduct, of which Sugriva was not guilty. (*SSB 2002 p.103*)

Hanuman told Rama, “Lord, I shall take you both to my King Sugriva who lives over there. Kindly tell him Your problem, and he might be able to help.” Carrying Rama and Lakshmana on his shoulders, Hanuman leapt over the hills and landed where Sugriva was. Seeing the two brothers, Sugriva forgot all his problems and became ecstatic. Beaming, he said to Rama, “Lord, You must be tired. Kindly rest here for a while, and partake of these fruits. There is also some cold and refreshing water for You to drink; have some of that also please.” But Rama and Lakshmana were not interested either in rest or in food. Sugriva sensed the power latent in Rama and was eager to befriend Him.

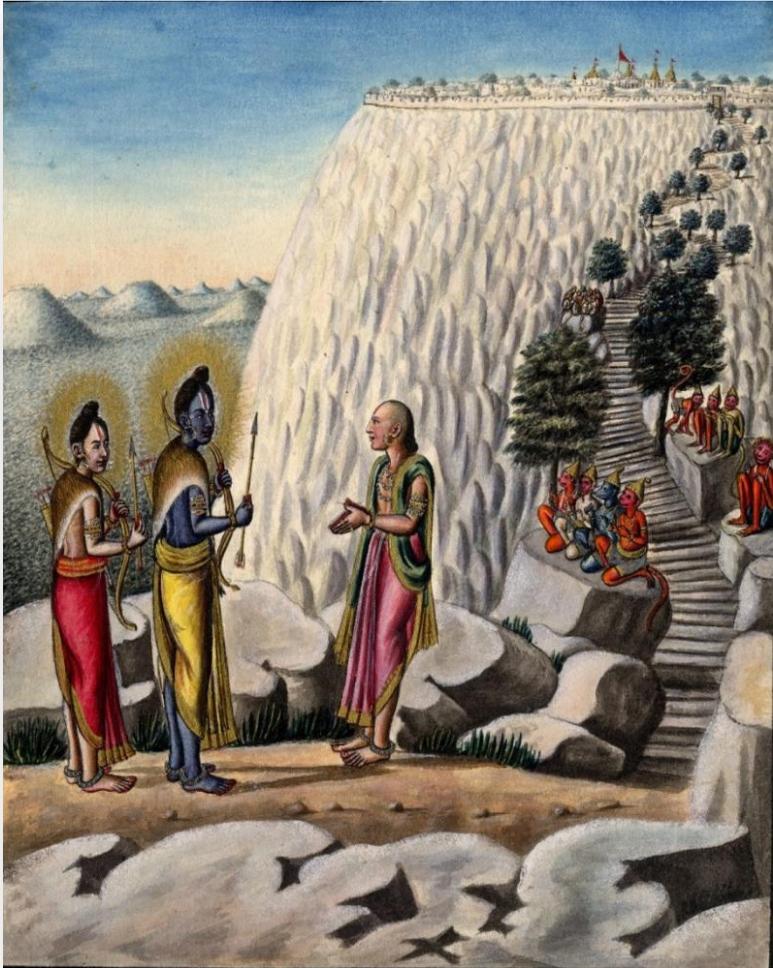


Figure 5: Hanuman meeting Rama and Lakshmana at Rishyamuka disguised as a Brahmin

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Description Watercolour painting on paper of Rama and Lakshmana meeting Hanuman at Rishyamuka, the residence of Sugriva.

Date 19thC(early) Company School

Source http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=182861&partid=1&searchText=rama&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numpages=10&images=on&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx¤tPage=8

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True friendship implies one breath though there are two bodies involved⁵¹. Sugriva wanted such a friend so that with his help he could overcome Vali. (*SSB 2000 p.123-124*)

On 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. (*SSB 1996 p.55*)

Sugriva shows Rama the bundle of jewels thrown down by Sita:

Listening to him Sugriva shed tears of contrition. He said, “Master, One day, while I was engaged in exchanging counsel with my ministers, I heard the cry, “Rama! Rama!” from the sky, from within the Pushpaka chariot, which we saw flying through space. While we were watching this strange scene, she threw a bundle tied in cloth down to where we stood. It was a bundle of jewels and so we have preserved it intact and safe. It is very likely that the Rakshasa called Ravana has carried her away. For there is no iniquity that Ravana has not committed so far.” Sugriva gnashed his teeth in anger at the monster whom he suspected as having done this foul deed. Rama asked that the bundle of jewels be brought. At this, Sugriva himself rose and proceeding to the cave where he had hidden it. He carried it to the Presence and placed it before Rama.

⁵¹ Now what sort of a friend should one have? Not the one who feigns loyalty but betrays with cunningness; not the one who speaks sweetly but never matches words with action. He alone is fit to be called a friend who swears by truth. True friendship implies one breath though there are two bodies involved. (*SSB 2000 p123-124*)

The cloth in which the jewels were bundled was a part of the fibre cloth which his step-mother had thrown towards Sita, so that she might wear it while in exile as a recluse in the forest. Recognising it as such, Lakshmana shed tears. Seeing him overcome, Sugriva and Hanuman also became sad. Rama loosened the knots and undid the bundle. He showed the contents to Lakshmana⁵² in order to confirm whether the jewels were those of Sita herself. (*RKRV Part II p.84*)

Sugriva and Hanuman looked on wistfully at the brothers, when they acted their roles and were deeply moved at the sight of the jewels dropped by Sita. Sugriva could not bear it any longer. He said, “Lord, do not give way to sorrow. This day itself I shall set on foot plans to discover where Sita is, and for destroying the wicked Ravana. I shall bring Sita back and make you both happy. This is my plighted word, my sacred promise.”

Rama expressed great satisfaction at this promise. He said, “Tell me in detail the reason why you are residing in this forest and not in your capital.” At this, Sugriva described consecutively and in clear concise terms, as beads are strung on a string to form a garland or rosary, who his parents were, which his real place of residence was, what were the reasons for the enmity that grew between himself and his elder brother, etc. Rama felt that the story of Sugriva was more or less akin to his own, especially the separation from the wife and the exile from the Kingdom. He felt that Sugriva was upright and just, and that Vali deserved

⁵² See Chapter, *Lakshmana* - **Rama asks Lakshmana to identify the Jewels of Sita:**

punishment since he had carried away his brother's wife, a crime which the code of monkey morals will not excuse. (*RKRK Part II p.85*)

Sugriva decides to test the strength of Rama:

In his exile, Sugriva was in need of a friend who was stronger than Vali. He wanted to make an alliance with Rama only if he proved himself to be stronger than Vali. Sugriva said to Rama, "Rama, my brother is of great power and strength. I want to find out⁵³ whether you are stronger than my brother." Rama nodded his assent⁵⁴. (*SSB 2002 p.103*)

⁵³ Doubts⁵³ readily spring to the mind of the worldly wise. They may be clever and intelligent where worldly matters are concerned but pretty dumb where real discrimination is required. 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.

*Modern education may make you clever,
But it would never help develop character.*

Education that does not foster virtues leads to [spiritual] blindness. Can you afford to be blind? No! Without virtues and the Grace of God, you cannot really achieve anything. (*SSB 2000 p.125*)

⁵⁴ Sugriva decided to test the strength of Rama, to find out whether He was stronger than his brother Vali. Rama felt pity for Sugriva, since he could not recognize Rama's Divinity. Only equals can judge equals; small ones can never grasp the powers of the great. Since Rama needed Hanuman for His mission, and since Hanuman belonged to the clan of Sugriva, He agreed to face the trial of strength set by Sugriva. Rama discharged His

Rama gently stroked the back of Sugriva, in order to induce him to trust him and be rid of fear and anxiety. Sugriva was eager to see the prowess of Rama. He was also wanting some prop for faith. He said, “Rama, once upon a time, I and my brother agreed to test our strength and skill on a line of seven giant palm trees, trying to fell them one after the other, shooting a single arrow right through all of them. I felled only three, but my brother Vali hit five and they all rolled on the ground. His capacity had that maximum measure. To defeat Vali, one should have strength beyond his. I am most eager to find out whether you have that extra might and to see how many palm trees you can fell with one arrow.” (*RKRV Part II p.92-93*)

On the following day, Sugriva took Rama to a huge fig tree and said, “Rama do you know what tree this is? It is a jungle tree that grows to a big size and is very strong. There are six trees in a row here. I am on the lookout for someone who can excel that feat.” Sugriva then requested Rama to despatch an arrow and the latter obliged. Rama’s arrow went through not just two trees but all the six of them and flew beyond to a great distance. (*SSB 2000 p.124*) His arrow carried all the fallen palms up a mountain that was in the distance, blasting the rocks on the way!

Sugriva was overwhelmed with wonder and devotion. He prostrated at the feet of Rama, exclaiming, “Rama, a hundred

arrow. It not only pierced through five trees but even crossed the mountains beyond. Sugriva immediately felt repentant for doubting the strength of Rama and sealed his friendship with Rama, with fire as the witness. Rama assured him that He would stand by him and crown him as king. (*SSB 1996 p.55*)

Valis could not have achieved this feat. I am indeed fortunate. I have no more worries in life, since I have secured your friendship! Though I am estranged from one Vali, I have today got a hundred fold Vali as my thickest comrade! Pardon my mistake. I am ashamed that my small-mindedness persuaded me to test your powers in this manner. Oh, I am indeed lucky that I am blessed with the friendship of God Himself, in this form. My tale of woe has ended this day. Hope has dawned in my heart that I can soon regain my Kishkindha. I am really happy that I can again live happily with my wife and children. I am only tossed in doubt about when and how soon it can happen— within minutes, or hours or days. Of course, that depends on the will of Rama, on His Grace. It will be fulfilled the moment He decides.” Sugriva knew that Rama alone could help him and that Rama alone had to be relied upon. He prostrated at Rama’s feet and said, “Rama, Your Will, Your Compassion, they are my sole refuge. When are you intending to put an end to my sorrows?”

Sugriva declares - Greatest enemy became Greatest Benefactor

Rising again from his seat, Sugriva declared, “Listen Rama, for so long, I had labelled Vali as my greatest enemy, and shivered in fear of him. Now, I find he is my greatest benefactor. For fear of him, I took residence on this mountain range. Since I was here, I could notice your arrival and meet you and be blessed by this friendship! Therefore, Vali is the root cause of all these developments. He is, indeed, my benefactor.” “Rama, we fight with another person while in a dream. We hate him to the utmost. We adopt all methods to ruin him; but as soon as we awaken and rise from bed, we know that the hatred and the struggle were

false and baseless. Your Darsan has awakened me from my dream. While in that dream, I hated Vali and interpreted all his actions as inimical to me. I fought with him, in my ignorance. Now that I have seen you and had the benefit of listening to your counsel, I have risen, conscious from my dream. The touch of your holy feet has imparted the vision of Truth. My long fostered hatred and envy, greed and egoism, my enmity towards Vali and my plans for vengeance, these made me weaker and weaker. I was sunk in my single-minded yearning for a favourable moment to pay off old scores. This was the *thapas*, the austerity, that granted me your Grace. I got you and my agony was reckoned as asceticism, my anger was transformed into love. Lord, bless me, pour Grace on me. I have no more desire to regain my kingdom. My wife and children have their careers marked out for them by destiny. What can I do to change the course of events? I shall no more worry about them. Enough for me if you confer on me the joy of serving you and being with you, in your presence, for the rest of my life.” (*RKRV Part II p. 94-95*)

Sugriva immediately prostrated at the feet of Rama and declared, “You are the friend I have been looking for all along.” Who was this friend that Sugriva had found? He was the very Lord Himself! The friendship between Rama and Sugriva was formally solemnised with fire as the sacred witness. Sugriva then said, “Rama, from today I am Your servant while You are my master and preceptor. Please relieve me of my sufferings, give

me courage, and lead me to victory over my brother.” Rama kept His promise to Sugriva and killed Vali⁵⁵. (*SSB 2000 p.124*)

The everlasting friendship was solemnised with ritual Fire as witness:

Sugriva was delighted at the sight of Rama and Lakshmana. Sugriva understood the reasons why Rama had come into the forest and to him. They both sympathised with each other and appreciated the other’s distress. They felt bound by the common bonds of comradeship. Sugriva fell at the feet of Rama and Lakshmana, and offered reverential hospitality. Rama assured Sugriva that he would destroy his fear and remove the distress, for he was the embodiment of compassion itself. Sugriva too promised to sacrifice everything, even his own life, in the service of Rama. The vow of everlasting friendship was solemnised with ritual Fire as witness. For Fire is present as warmth and light in the heart of every living being. Fire that is present in the inner consciousness can burn away any wavering or waywardness that might affect the vow. In fact, Fire or Agni (the subtle Divine Effulgence and Illumination which is the core of Fire) is the Chief element in the Ramayana. Rama was born of the nectarine gift brought by the God of Fire from out of the sacrificial altar. Sita was wedded to Rama with Agni as Witness.

Lanka was destroyed by Agni. It was in Agni That the Reality, the principle of Sita was kept in deposit while she was taken b

⁵⁵ This story teaches that if you are looking for a friend to help you, then that friend must be stronger than your adversaries. In life, obstacles are the main adversaries, and the only friend who can help you across is God; He is the only True Friend (*SSB 2000 p.124*)

Ravana to Lanka. And it was from Agni that she was again redeemed, when the war with Ravana ended in victory for Rama. The implication is that the heart of Rama was cleansed and rid of alloy with each contact with Agni. For Rama is the symbol of Jnana or the Most Supreme Wisdom. He is the symbol of the most supreme morality, too. So the pact with Sugriva was affirmed and sanctified by invoking Agni (Fire) as the witness. Lakshmana sought to deepen faith and tighten the bond by relating to Sugriva the Truth of Rama and the mission on which he had come. (*RKRV Part II p.82-83*)

Rama asks Sugriva to fight with his brother:

Rama asked Sugriva to challenge his brother for a fight, but cautioned him that that the fight should take place ten miles away from Kishkindha. Rama told Sugriva to do this because the rules of exile prohibited him from entering into cities and villages. These rules compelled him to confine himself only to the forests. Hence, Rama wanted Sugriva to call Vali out of his kingdom so that he would be able to help Sugriva. (*SSB 2002 p.104*)

On the strength of the promise given by Rama, Sugriva dashed to the mansion of Vali and challenged him to a fight. But poor Sugriva had to flee, severely battered by the blows of Vali. (*SSB 1996 p.55*)

Sugriva's disheartened plea and Rama's Promise to kill Vali

Rama and Lakshmana followed the fleeing Sugriva. When they reached the hill resort, Sugriva fell at the feet of Rama, his heart heavy with the burden of disappointment, despair, pain and fear.

He said, “Lord, I do not understand why you caused this disgrace to me. I proceeded on this venture, buoyed up with a huge pile of hope that you would come to my rescue. All the while, I was watching for the moment when your arrow will hit Vali and finish him. But that event never happened. I could not bear the weight of those blows. So, I had to take the shameful course of fleeing for sheer life. My brother is a mighty hitter. I could not stand those blows.”

You are so like each other - Deep meaning:

Rama consoled him and said, “Sugriva! Don’t grieve. Listen to the reasons. You are so like each other, so indistinguishable one from the other, so much the same in appearance and attainments, that I could not take correct aim at him.” Those words had a deep inner meaning, too. They meant that Vali too was devoted to His Feet. “He too is my votary. He has yearned for My Grace as much as you have.” But Sugriva could not grasp the hidden import of the declaration. He prayed, “Knowing so much, could you not discover who Vali was and who Sugriva was? I cannot believe your words. I do not know the reason why you could not. Perhaps, you wanted me to display my ability to the utmost. If that was your intention, I could have taken note of it from the beginning itself. What really happened was, I was so confident that you would bring about his downfall, that I took the fight rather easy, and in a light-hearted manner.”

Rama drew the downhearted, dispirited Sugriva to his presence and consoled him profusely. He passed his Divine hand over the body of Sugriva, so that the pain disappeared in a trice. The wounds and contusions were instantaneously healed. Sugriva

was overwhelmed with surprise. He exclaimed, “Rama? Your hand can achieve anything. It contains everything. Creation, Preservation, Destruction, all three are subservient to Your Will. I have no desire to rule over this kingdom. Compared to the joy Your Grace can confer, that joy is nothing at all.” Rama did not pay heed to his words. He said, “You have to get ready to confront your brother once again.” Thus, Rama forced Sugriva into the fray. Sugriva had no liking for the fight, but he was certain that this time Rama would keep his promise and kill Vali. He walked boldly on, with confidence in his heart. Rama got some wild flowers and had them strung as a garland which he put round Sugriva’s neck. (*RKR V Part II p.97-99*)

The Second Fight and Vali’s end:

Thus encouraged and filled with heroism, Rama and Lakshmana persuaded Sugriva to shout the challenge again at the gate of Vali’s Fort. They hid themselves behind a tree that was nearby. When Vali rushed out eager for the fight, and when the earth quaked under the weight of his impact, Sugriva was frightened. He prayed to Rama with all his heart to come to his succour soon, and went forward to meet his foe. To justify his own attainments and capacity, Sugriva fought to the best of his ability. When his strength gave way, and the first signs of exhaustion appeared in him, he called out “Rama” just once. Rama has as his favourite task the guarding of his devotees. So, when he heard the call, he placed an arrow on his bow and shot it

straight into the proud heart of Vali. Vali swung round helplessly and slid until he fell flat on the ground⁵⁶. (*RKR V Part II p.100*)

Sugriva installed on throne and learns administration of Governance from Lakshmana:

Rama advised Sugriva to bring up Angada with love and care. When the rites were over, he sent Lakshmana into the Capital City, and had Sugriva installed on the throne. Hanuman and others too entered the City and helped him, as friends and followers, to carry on the task of government successfully. As soon as he assumed the reins of office, Sugriva called together the elders and leaders of the community. He ordered them to make all proper arrangements to seek and find the whereabouts of Sita. He asked them to initiate all steps necessary for the purpose. Sugriva was not happy that he became the ruler and was honoured by that responsibility. He was, on the other hand, sad and morose, because he had been the cause for the killing of his brother. “Alas, anger leads one to perpetrate the direst of sins. It breeds hatred, and murders love. Shame on me! To what depths have I fallen, since I allowed anger and hatred to enter my heart. My heart is torn in anguish by the words of adoration Vali addressed to Rama. I never realised, even in my dreams, that Vali had such a deal of devotion and dedication in him. Ah, his wisdom is boundless. His furious anger did not allow that wisdom to express itself! Yes, anger suppresses the divine in one. Lust and anger drag life into disaster.” Though much depressed by these thoughts, Sugriva learned the guidelines of

⁵⁶ See Chapter, *Vali* - **Vali places his son in Rama’s fold and breathes his last:**

government from Lakshmana. He prayed to Rama that He should enter the City and bless him and his subjects. But Rama said that he had to live in the forests only and not enter any town or city. Otherwise he would be disobeying his father's wish. (*RKRV Part II p.108*)

Sugriva suggests the search for Sita to start after rains:

Sugriva held a conference of leaders and announced that, since the season was late autumn, rains were imminent and the monkey hordes would be hard put to it to move about in the cold and in the storm. So he suggested that as soon as the autumn passed, they must set about the task of searching for the place where Sita was. He presented this information to Rama and Lakshmana also. (*RKRV Part II p.109*)

Sugriva humbly said to Lakshmana, “It is the rainy season now. The climate is not conducive for the monkeys to move about searching for Sita. I can never forget the help rendered to me by Rama. Very soon my emissaries will comb every forest and valley for Sita.” (*SSB 1996 p.56*)

Rama realised the truth of these statements and he acceded to the proposal. The brothers retired to the Rishyamuka Hill and took residence there. (*RKRV Part II p.109*)

Rama sends a warning to Sugriva to commence the search for Sita:

The rains stopped. The Sarad season dawned on the world. The earth shone resplendently green. Grass sprouted everywhere and soon the earth decked itself with many-coloured floral dress.

Greed weakens when gladness grows. So too, the waters evaporated when the star Agasthya appeared in the sky. The mind is rendered pure and pellucid when desire and delusion disappear. So too, the rivers were rendered clear and clean.

Two months passed, but no action was taken by Sugriva to help Rama⁵⁷. Rama told Lakshmana, "Brother. it is desirable to give a warning to Sugriva now." Lakshmana paid heed to that command⁵⁸.

Sugriva failed to keep his word. He had not commandeered his forces, though the rainy season had ended. So, Lakshmana vented his anger at his ingratitude and inequity. "You can never cleanse yourselves of the sin of ungratefulness and breach of promise. Your conduct is so reprehensible that even vultures will desist from feeding on your corpse." (*SSS Vol. XIX p.71*) Lakshmana told Sugriva, "You have forgotten to honour your word after receiving help from Rama." (*SSB 1996 p.56*)

When the terrified culprit fell at the feet of Rama, seeking pardon, Rama said, "Lakshmana! Safe and happy on his throne, Sugriva is blinded by pride, power and ignorance. Misery alone can open the eyes of people to the values they have neglected. He has been holding on to the trivial and the temporary which intoxicate man with fleeting joys. How can such a person follow the path of *Dharma*?" Hanuman, who heard this compassionate reaction, returned with Sugriva and advised him to repent and

⁵⁷ *SSB 1996 p.56*

⁵⁸ *RKRV Part II p.111*

reaffirm his rectitude and thankfulness. One has to recognise one's faults and remedy their consequences by sincere self-examination and repentance. (*SSS Vol. XIX p.72*)

The Search Begins:

Sugriva called together the leaders of the monkey hordes and initiated the arrangements. Sugriva gave everyone the determination and courage needed for the execution of the task assigned. Urged by the resolution that the mission must succeed, he sent them to all the four quarters. He entrusted the overall leadership to Hanuman himself. Led by Hanuman, the entire assembly of monkeys shouted, “Jai” to Sugriva and “Jai” to Rama, the Lord. Dancing and jumping in glee, the monkeys hurried on their different demarcated paths, inspired by Hanuman and the holiness of the mission. (*RKRV Part II p.111-112*)

Sugriva sent the soldiers of his army in the four directions, in search of Sita. (*SSB 1996 p.56*)

When Vibhishana comes to Rama’s Camp:

The Vanaras who noticed him took him to be a messenger from Ravana, and they reported the arrival to their Ruler, Sugriva. Vibhishana⁵⁹ was prevented from entering the camp. The information was conveyed to the Lord, thus: “Oh Rama! The brother of Ravana has come to have your Darsan.” Rama asked

⁵⁹ See Chapter, *Vibhishana - Vibhishana joins Rama*

Sugriva, who brought him the news, what he thought about the incident. Sugriva replied that it was difficult to understand the plans and purposes of Rakshasas since they assume various forms as and when they like and so are inexplicable. We do not know why he has come among us. I guess it is to open a wedge between me and Angada, the son of Vali. I believe it is advisable to bind him and keep him aside, without delay.” Rama replied, “Friend! Your words are correct. You spoke in accordance with the injunctions in the Sastras about defections. Yet, listen to my vow. It may be opposed to your advice. 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. Perhaps he has been sent by Ravana in order to sow the seeds of dissension among us. Well why should we be afraid of him even if this be true? Or he has come frightened by his brother, if he surrenders to me, I shall guard him and foster him as my own life breath. Therefore, bring him in, quickly,” he ordered and Sugriva hastened to obey. *(RKR Part II p.166-167)*

THE SEIZE

Sugriva and the other Vanaras encounter Kumbhakarna:

When the Vanaras heard these words, *“That Mountain of a Rakshasa is Kumbhakarna. He is a ferociously brave fighter. He has come to engage you in battle.”* they were so angry that they spouted fire and leaped under the leadership of Hanuman on the

enemy forces. They threw huge trees and enormous boulders at him. But Kumbhakarna⁶⁰ stood firm and unaffected. The Vanara attack was like hitting a mad elephant with an eyelash! Boiling with anger, Hanuman administered a mighty blow with his clenched fist and Kumbhakarna reeled. But recovering soon he returned the blow, and felled him to the ground. Nala and Nila now joined the fight. They too could not withstand the might of Kumbhakarna. Fear seized the Vanara hordes. Sugriva and Angada had their share of the mighty Kumbhakarna's onslaught and they rolled on the ground. At last, Kumbhakarna squeezed Sugriva under his arm and carried him off the field. Kumbhakarna asserted that, by carrying the King off, he had vanquished the Vanara Army. Meanwhile, Hanuman regained awareness of the state of things. He found Sugriva was not around. He got anxious to discover his whereabouts. While being carried away, pressed under the arm of the mighty Kumbhakarna, Sugriva recovered consciousness and he tried his best to wriggle out of the hold. Hanuman found him engaged in this desperate bid and ran to render him help. However, Sugriva separated himself from his captor and started a valiant fight against him. He bit off the nose and ears of Kumbhakarna, and the monster had, as a consequence, enormous difficulty to breathe. (*RKRV Part II p.224-225*)

⁶⁰ See Chapter, *Kumbhakarna*- **THE SEIZE**

BACK TO AYODHYA

Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Vibhishana, Sugriva and all others boarded the *Pushpaka Vimana* and proceeded to fly towards Ayodhya⁶¹. (*SSB 2002 p.127*)

CORONATION AND END OF PLAY:

As soon as they entered the Palace, Vashishta, the Royal Preceptor, announced the date when the Coronation of Rama as the Emperor of Ayodhya⁶².

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 needs⁶³. (*RKR Part II p.279*)

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 time⁶⁴.

⁶¹ Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama's Reign - The Reign Of Righteousness – Rama Rajyam - BACK TO AYODHYA*

⁶² Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama's Reign - The Reign Of Righteousness – Rama Rajyam - Mahapattabhisheka of Rama*

⁶³ Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Rama's Reign - The Reign Of Righteousness – Rama Rajyam - Rama attends personally to Bharatha:*

⁶⁴ Under Section, *Rama* See Chapter, *Rama's Reign- The Reign Of Righteousness - Rama Rajyam - ENDING THE PLAY*

Striking personalities of Ramayana:

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 realized Rama's greatness and goodness only after meeting Him, while Vibhishana knew of Rama's excellence even before he met Him. (*SSB 1996 p.92*)

The Three Clashes

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 Kishkindha. (*SSB 2002 p.106-107*)

10.3 VALI



Vali.

Figure 6: Vali

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Description **English:** Watercolour painting on paper of Vali, the Monkey King killed by Rāma. Vali is shown in profile, walking to the left with red skin. He has a golden crown on his head and wears numerous chains around his neck. He holds a mace in his left hand which he rest on his left shoulder and in his right hand he holds a noose. He wears decorated shorts and jewellery on his arms, ankles and ears. In the distance are shown mountains. The painting is surrounded by a black border.

Date 19thC(early)

Source http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=182856&partid=1&searchText=vali&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numpages=10&images=on&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx¤tPage

VALI

In the Hindu epic Ramayana, the Vanara Bali was king of Kishkindha, a son of Indra and the elder brother of Sugriva. He was killed by Rama, an Avatar of Vishnu.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

VALI⁶⁵: A great monkey-king; brother and enemy of Sugriva.
(*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

BIRTH

Through the grace that Indra bestowed on her (Ruksharaja), she got a son, Vali. (*RKRV Part II p.86*)

⁶⁵ Also spelt as **Vaali**

CHARACTER OF VALI:

Vali was a very strong and powerful Vanara king; but he lacked virtue and indulged in evil deeds. (*SSB 2002 p.102*)

STORY OF VALI AS TOLD BY SUGRIVA

Vali's fight with Mayavi and the reasons for his vengeance and anger against Sugriva:

We (*Vali and Sugriva*) reached Kishkindha. We destroyed the rakshasas who infested the forests there. One day, a rakshasa named Mayavi, the son of Maya, proceeded against us in order to wreak vengeance against us. He besieged us at midnight and created tremendous confusion. My elder brother could not tolerate, even one moment, the audacity of the foe. Vali rose and fell upon him with all his might, and Mayavi fled in terror. Mayavi hid himself in a cave, and Vali pursued him to the very last. I was also engaged in the hot pursuit of the wicked rakshasa, close behind Vali. As he entered the cave where Mayavi had taken shelter, Vali directed me, 'Brother! I am going into this cave to kill the enemy. Watch the entrance and remain here, lest he escape.' When I asked him how long, he replied, 'Even fifteen days and nights! Keep close watch that long. If I do not emerge on the sixteenth day, you may take it that he has killed me. You can then return.' I waited and watched for full thirty days. By that time, the smell of blood emerged from the cave, a smell that I inferred was that of my brother's blood. I feared that Mayavi might emerge alive from the cave. So I placed a huge boulder at the mouth of the cave and knowing that it was foolish to wait any longer, I returned home. I gathered my companions and well-

wishers and consulted them about the next step. We felt that Mayavi who could kill the redoubtable Vali must indeed be a formidable enemy and so, I spent the days in perpetual fright.

“The inhabitants of the capital realised that they must have a leader in these hard times when they were beset by foes on all sides. They pleaded that since Vali had died, I must step into his place. I had no inclination to accept the authority, but they forced me into it. Shortly after, within about two or three days, Vali returned to the capital. He had slain Mayavi and rid the land of that vile foe. On finding me holding the position of ruler, Vali was filled with uncontrollable anger. He inferred that I had shut the exit of the cave with a boulder to prevent him from coming out alive, and that I had deliberately sought the position that was thrust on me. He decided to wreak vengeance on me for this. He began treating me as the lowest of the low and to impute motives for even the slightest fault or mistake. He deprived me of all powers and positions and looked down on me as if I were less than a menial of his household.

He forced me out of the family home. He took my wife into his custody. One day, determined to destroy me, he fought with me ferociously. I could not stand up to his prowess. So I left Kishkindha and took refuge here. Vali insisted that those who supported me or befriended me should not stay behind and so they have also joined me at this place. My wife tried hard to come back to me; but however much she tried, he did not allow her to come away. He treated her as his own wife.” Sugriva’s eyes were streaming tears as he related his sad story.

Vali's Curse as a consequence of his actions:

There is a curse laid on him by a sage. Dundubhi, the brother of Mayavi, was a mighty hero. No one could equal him in valour and physical strength. He revelled in confrontation with mountains and the sea, in sheer joy at demonstrating his might! One day, while he was exulting on his daring exploits, standing in front of a mountain peak that he had pulverised, he heard an unseen Voice announce: 'Dundubhi! Do not allow your head to swell so! Beware! There lives one who is mightier than you. He is gaily wandering on the shores of the Pampa Lake, assuming leadership and asserting his power. His name is Vali.' When these words fell on his ears, Dundubhi changed himself into a formidable buffalo and rushed into Kishkindha, where the Pampa Lake is situated. He ploughed the earth with his horns and bellowed his way through hill and dale, parading in lofty pride his impregnable power. His fury was getting wilder at every step. He cast terror all around. When he dug his horns into the earth, huge trees rolled uprooted, on the ground. His ferocity quaked all hearts. While he was thus invading his region, like Rahu venturing to swallow the Moon, Vali perceived him; and that very instant, he fell upon him. The two strange-looking foes struggled for victory, like wild tuskers entangled in mortal combat. The fight lasted more than six hours. Finally, Vali gave a mortal blow to Dundubhi. Staggering with pain, he fell dead on the ground, like a mountain peak reeling to the ground during a violent earthquake. The impact was so unsettling that giant trees too lay flat on the ground along with him! Vali was so intoxicated with success that he tore the corpse apart and threw the halves far into the distance, one to the south and the other to the north. But one bleeding mass of flesh and bone fell on a

hermitage, showering a rain of blood over the holy area, which polluted the ascetics who were peacefully engaged in meditation and recitation of sacred hymns. It was the hermitage of the great saint, Mathanga. He had gone to the river for his ritual bath. When he returned, he noticed drops of blood all over the place and soon came near the half-corpse of a terror-striking monster. He could not contain himself. His disciples and pupils, yearning to be bathed in bliss, were bathed in blood. His forbearance gave way. He halted a moment wondering who could have dared commit such a sin. His anger could not be kept under restraint. It did not allow him to look back or peer into the future. He pronounced a terrible curse⁶⁶! ‘If that vicious, sinful Vali approaches this hill or even casts his eye on this hill, may his head be broken in two.’ That was the imprecation he uttered. Scared by that curse, Vali is keeping away from this hill. He cannot approach this place or even look upon it”, Sugriva related. *(RKR Part II p.87-91)*

That is why Sugriva, Hanuman and others chose to live on Rishyamuka Mountain when they were banished from the kingdom of Vali. They were certain that Vali would not dare to come there. *(SSS Vol.32 Part II p.40)*

Rama’s Promise to Sugriva and asks him to fight Vali:

Rama said ... “Whatever might happen, I shall grant you the kingdom. You cannot escape the responsibility of ruling over it.

⁶⁶ Who was responsible for all this? It was Vali himself. He could have stopped with the killing of Dundubhi. Instead, he flung the body away, driven by his anger, ego, and hatred. These three evil qualities were responsible for his ruin. *(SSS Vol.32 Part II p.40)*

You cannot evade the fight with Vali which must take place tomorrow. Come, get ready.”

Following this command given by Rama, Sugriva stood before Kishkindha City and shouted so fiercely that the walls of the fort shook, and the earth quaked in fear. No sooner did that call fall on his ear than Vali rose from his bed as a cobra does when it is trodden upon, and came out, ready to fight and put Sugriva to flight. He knew it was his brother who had challenged him to combat.

Tara counsels Vali not to fight Sugriva:

At this, Tara⁶⁷, Vali’s wife, clasped his feet and reminded him of the words spoken by his own son some days earlier. She said, “Lord, the brothers who have sought his help are no ordinary men. They are endowed with mighty powers. Listening to her pathetic importunities, Vali burst into a jeering laugh. “Cowardly woman,” he said. “It is said that Rama is equal-minded. If that is true, he will certainly look upon both of us with an equal eye. Moreover, I have not done him any harm, have I? In spite of this, if Rama kills me, well, I shall believe my birth and years of life have been fulfilled thereby!”

Vali saw only Sugriva there. So, he jumped on him and both began a heavy fight with their fists, inflicting hammer blows on each. Sugriva could not bear the rain of fierce hits. He felt a desire to flee. Vali with many a kick and pull, caused such agonising pain that Sugriva managed to escape leaving Vali

⁶⁷ See Chapter, *Tara- Tara counsels Vali not to fight with Sugriva:*



Figure 7: The fight between Vali and Sugriva

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Artist Unknown

Title *Vali and Sugriva Fighting, Folio from the Dispersed 'Shangri Ramayana'*

Date between 1700 and 1710

Medium opaque watercolor on paper

Current location Asian Art collection , **Brooklyn Museum**

Source/Photographer Online Collection of Brooklyn Museum; Photo: Brooklyn Museum, 77.201.1_front_IMLS_SL2.jpg

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victor! Vali retired into the Fort, patting his thighs exultingly.
(RKR Part II p.95-97)

The second fight and the end of Vali:

He felt disappointed that Rama had not come to his rescue. Sri Rama explained to him that he could not distinguish between the two brothers, as they looked very much alike. Hence Rama talked to him sweetly and consoled him. He also infused courage into him and assured him that he would kill Vali in the next fight. But he asked Sugriva that he should wear a garland around his neck so that He would be able to distinguish him from Vali. Sugriva put on the garland. *(SSB 2002 p.105)*

Rama and Lakshmana persuaded Sugriva to shout the challenge again at the gate of Vali's Fort. They hid themselves behind a tree that was nearby. When Vali rushed out eager for the fight, and when the earth quaked under the weight of his impact, Sugriva was frightened. He prayed to Rama. Rama has as his favourite task the guarding of his devotees. So, when he heard the call, he placed an arrow on his bow and shot it straight into the proud heart of Vali. Vali swung round helplessly and slid until he fell flat on the ground. At that moment, Rama came near Vali and granted him the Divine vision of Himself.

Conversation between Vali and Rama:

Though struck by the fatal shaft, Vali rose and assumed a sitting posture. He was strong and courageous beyond compare! With folded palms, he cast his lingering looks on that cloud-blue complexion, those lotus-petal eyes, and shed streams of tears in his ecstatic exhilaration. He could scarce contain his joy. He

exclaimed “Oh Rama! Being such a divinely auspicious embodiment of beauty, being the very Lord of all Creation, why had you to perform this questionable act? Had you but told me, and then killed me, I would have been extremely happy to die. Would I have refused to render you the good that Sugriva could? No. No.

This has been thus done, not without some justifiable reason. For the Lord would never undertake any task without just reason. Seen from the outside, the task might appear contrary to our idea of Divinity; but, with the inner view, the fact that it is based on Truth would become evident. I know that the deeds of the Lord should not be interpreted from the common worldly point of view. The Lord is above and beyond the Gunas, attributes that limit and regulate human conduct. So, His deeds can be understood correctly only when viewed from a position unaffected by emotion, passion, or prejudice. Acts done with perfect equanimity can be understood only by perfect equanimity. If you are swayed by characteristics and attributes, you would naturally see only kindred characteristics and attributes, even when they are absent!”

Vali was endowed with a very clear intellect. So, he argued thus and said “Rama, I know full well your prowess and skill. You can with one arrow destroy not only this Vali, but the entire Universe. You can create the Universe again. Nevertheless, I desire to learn from you the sin for which you have killed me. Please identify for me the error I was responsible for. You have come upon earth in human form in order to re-establish righteousness, haven’t you? What is the meaning and purpose

of this action—hiding behind a tree, like a common hunter, in order to kill me.” Rama graciously sat by the side of the dying Vali and said, “Vali! You know that my deeds are not motivated by selfish ends. Give up your wrong notion that I sought and secured the friendship of Sugriva in order to search the whereabouts of Sita. Why, you yourself said just now that I have assumed this human form for the purpose of re-establishing righteousness on earth! Now, tell me, if I simply witness the wrong, the unjust and vicious deeds of yours, what would you call it? Service or disservice to the world? Righteous or unrighteous? The brother’s wife, the sister and the daughter-in-law are all three equivalent in status to one’s daughter. To cast sinful eyes on them makes one a heinous sinner. No sin affects one when such a sinner is killed.

“How unjust was it for you to infer that Sugriva closed the entrance of the cave with the evil intention of killing you! You said you would come out at the end of fifteen days, at the most, and asked him to wait at the mouth of the cave until then. Yet, he waited there, anxiously awaiting you, for one full month! Finally, when he was assailed by the smell of blood, he was grieved that his brother was killed by the ogre. He hesitated to enter the cave, for to the ogre who destroyed you, Sugriva would certainly be no match. When he placed the boulder up against the mouth of the cave, his intention was to prevent the ogre from coming out, and to see that he is confined within that cave itself. The citizens pressed on him the rulership and he had to accede to their wishes. What crime had Sugriva committed when he acted thus? You did not stay to inquire. He never disobeyed your commands and directives, even to the slightest extent; for he loved you and

revered you. He adheres strictly to the path of Truth. But you treasured in your heart vengeance against him for no reason at all. Your overweening pride drove him into the forest. When you sent him out, you should have allowed his wife too to go with him. Instead you chose her to be your wife, the person whom you should have treated as your own daughter. Do you call this a sin or don't you? There is no sin more heinous than this. Besides, you occupy the position of the ruler of this region. You have to protect and foster your subjects. How can you punish those who commit crimes when you yourself revel in the same crime? 'As is the King, so are the subjects,' says the proverb. The people will be such as their rulers are. Therefore, what you have done becomes more heinous and more reprehensible. Doesn't it?" Thus, Rama out of His infinite love clarified to Vali the crimes and sins he had committed.

Vali listened with attention and thought over what he heard. At last, he realised his error, and said, "Lord, my cleverness has failed to make you pronounce my acts as right. Now hear me! I am not a sinner at all. Had I been a sinner, how could I be floored by an arrow from the Lord's own hands, and how could I pass my last moments looking on the Face of Divinity and listening to the sweet words of the Lord?" Rama was highly pleased at these words spoken with such high wisdom, out of the depths of love and devotion, delight and dedication.

Then Rama wished to announce to the world the genuine spirit of renunciation that Vali had at heart. He said, "Vali, I am restoring you to life. I am freeing you from the obligation of old age and senility. Come, have your body back again." He placed His hand

on the head of Vali. But even while He was blessing him so, Vali intervened with a prayer, “Ocean of Compassion, give ear to my appeal. However many attempts one might make throughout life, at the moment when breath deserts us, death cannot be avoided. At that moment, even the sovereign sages do not get Your Name on their tongues! Unique good fortune I have secured now, here, when I pronounce Your Name, look on Your Form, touch Your Feet and listen to Your Words. If I miss this chance and let it slip away, who can say how long I may have to wait for these again? Continuing to breathe, what great achievement will I accomplish? No, I do not wish to live any longer.”

“Lord, even the Vedas, the Source of all Knowledge, speak of you as only ‘Not this’ ‘Not this.’ Thus they proceed, until they declare finally, ‘This.’ ‘This’ I have now secured in my grasp. Shall I let it slip? Is there in this world a fool who would give up the Divine Wish-fulfilling Tree that he has in his grasp for the sake of a wild weed? This Vali, born out of a mental resolution of Brahma Himself, endowed with strength of body and sharpness of intellect and renowned for these qualities, cannot yield to the temptation of clinging to the body as if it is real and valuable. No, if I yield, I will become the target of infamy. Why elaborate? When there is no self-satisfaction, what do other types of satisfaction matter? Lord, as a result of Your Darsan and Your Words, I have overcome all sense of duality and distinction. I have acquired the Vision of the One, apart from all the rest. The mass of ‘consequence’ I had earned through my sins has been destroyed. Let the Body which is burdened with the consequence be destroyed along with it. Do not allow another body appear to

bear the burden.” Vali declared his determination to give up his breath.

Vali places his son in Rama’s fold and breathes his last:

Vali called his son to his presence. He said: “This fellow grew up until now as the lust-born son of this body. He is strong, virtuous, humble and obedient. Now I wish You would foster him as Your Love-deserving Son. I have placed him in Your hands.” With these words he placed the hands of his son in the hands of Rama. Rama drew Angada⁶⁸, the son, near Him, and blessed him, with great love. Pleased at the acceptance, Vali shed tears of joy. His eyes were fixed on the Divine Face before him. His eyes slowly closed in death. Will an elephant worry or take any notice of flowers that fall away from the garland round its neck? With the same unconcern, Vali too allowed his breath to slide away from him.

The inhabitants of Pampa Town gathered in sad groups as soon as they heard the news of Vali’s demise. (*RKRV Part II 100-105*)

⁶⁸ See Chapter, *Angada*

10.4 TARA

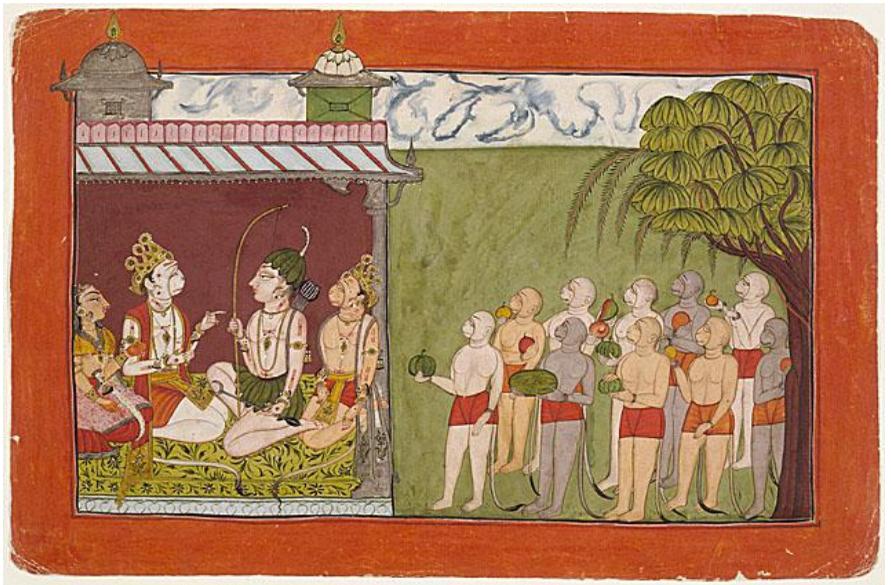


Figure 8: Tara

Source of the Photo

Description **English:** Lakshmana Meets with Tara, Sugriva, and Hanuman in the Palace of Kishkandha

Date circa 1700

Source Lakshmana Meets with Tara, Sugriva, and Hanuman in the Palace of Kishkandha

Author Unknown

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TARA

In the Hindu epic Ramayana, Tara is the Queen of Kishkindha and wife of the monkey (Vanara) King Vali. After being widowed, she becomes the Queen of Sugriva, Vali's brother. Tara's intelligence, presence of mind, courage, and devotion to her husband is praised. She is extolled as one of the panchakanya ("five (revered) women"), the recital of whose names is believed to dispel sin.

When Sugriva challenges Vali to a duel, Tara wisely advises Vali not to accept because of the former's alliance with Rama—the hero of the Ramayana and an Avatar of the god Vishnu—but Vali does not heed her, and dies from Rama's arrow, at the behest of Sugriva. The Ramayana and its later adaptations emphasize Tara's lamentation.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

TARA

Tara⁶⁹: Vali's wife (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

⁶⁹ Also spelt as Thaaraa

Wife of Vali:

Tara was the faithful wife of Vali. She was a chaste wife,⁷⁰ who had many virtues. She was highly intelligent. (*SSB 2002 p.104*)

Tara counsels Vali not to fight with Sugriva:

She wanted to restrain him from entering into a fight with Sugriva. She pleaded with him by holding his hands; “You should not go for a fight now. I have heard that Sugriva has befriended some powerful princes to help him. Do not be in haste, it is dangerous. The wise ones pause and ponder before undertaking any task. Haste can make waste. It can be dangerous too.” Tara spoke these words to Vali and took him back. (*SSB 2002 p.104*)

Tara clasped his feet and reminded him of the words spoken by his own son some days earlier. She said, “Lord, the brothers who have sought his (Sugriva’s) help are no ordinary men. They are endowed with mighty powers. Sugriva, who was hiding all this time, has come now with new confidence and courage. He has even dared challenge you. He would not venture to do so without looking before and after. He must have received conviction about their capabilities and won promise of assistance. The princes, Rama and Lakshmana have Divine Powers. It is not propitious that you enter into battle with them.”

Listening to her pathetic importunities, Vali burst into a jeering laugh. “Cowardly woman,” he said, “It is said that Rama is equal-minded. If that is true, he will certainly look upon both of

⁷⁰ See – Panchakanya

us with an equal eye. Moreover, I have not done him any harm, have I? In spite of this, if Rama kills me, well, I shall believe my birth and years of life have been fulfilled thereby!

Tara was happy on the one hand that he had such outlook. On the other hand she could not entertain for a moment the idea of separation from her lord. So, she pleaded again, “Lord it is considered a bad omen when a woman objects. Do not rashly accept the challenge.” But Vali set aside all her pleadings. When battle calls, no one cares for omens. Either the enemy should die or one’s own life should end,” So saying Vali pushed Tara aside and rushed towards the main entrance to the Fort roaring in terror striking rage. (*RKRV Part II p. 96-97*)

Rama explains to Vali the wrong acts done by him:

Though struck by the fatal shaft⁷¹, Vali rose and assumed a sitting posture. He was strong and courageous beyond compare! With folded palms, he cast his lingering looks on that cloud-blue complexion, those lotus-petal eyes, and shed streams of tears in his ecstatic exhilaration. He could scarce contain his joy. He exclaimed, “I desire to learn from you the sin for which you have killed me. Please identify for me the error I was responsible for.”

Rama graciously sat by the side of the dying Vali and said, “Vali! You know that my deeds are not motivated by selfish ends. Give up your wrong notion that I sought and secured the friendship of Sugriva in order to search the whereabouts of Sita. Why, you yourself said just now that I have assumed this human

⁷¹ See Chapter, *Vali - Conversation between Vali and Rama:*

form for the purpose of re-establishing righteousness on earth! Now, tell me, if I simply witness the wrong, the unjust and vicious deeds of yours, what would you call it? Service or disservice to the world? Righteous or unrighteous? The brother's wife, the sister and the daughter-in-law are all three equivalent in status to one's daughter. To cast sinful eyes on them makes one a heinous sinner. No sin affects one when such a sinner is killed.

When you sent him out, you should have allowed his wife too to go with him. Instead you chose her to be your wife, the person whom you should have treated as your own daughter. Do you call this a sin or don't you? There is no sin more heinous than this.”

Tara laments the death of Vali:

The inhabitants of Pampa Town gathered in sad groups as soon as they heard the news of Vali's demise. His wife, Tara, came to the place, accompanied by her retinue. She fell upon the body and lost consciousness. The agonizing wail of Tara was so poignant that stones melted in sympathy. When she recovered consciousness, off and on, she looked on the face of her lord and cried in utter grief. “In spite of all the protest I made and the arguments I used to stop you, you rushed forward to this doom. The wife should ever be vigilant about the security and happiness of her lord. There is no one more concerned about the welfare of the husband than the wife. Others, however eminent, will always have some little egoism mixed in the advice they give. Lord! On account of the mischief of Destiny, my counsel could not prevail.



Figure 9: Tara laments the death of Vali

Source of Photo:

Description **English:** "The Death of Valin and Tara's Discourse
n

c. 1720

Artist/maker unknown, India, Himachal Pradesh or Jammu and Kashmir

Opaque watercolor, gold, and silver-colored paint on paper 8 1/4 x 12
1/8 inches (21 x 30.8 cm) 2004-149-30 Alvin O. Bellak Collection, 2004

Date c. 1720

Source <http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/35721.html?mulR=733>

Author unknown

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two-dimensional work of art. The work of art itself is in
the public domain for the following reason:*

Lord, how am I to foster and bring up this son? Will those who killed you desist from harming your son? Who will guide us now? How did your mind agree to leave us behind and proceed to the next world? For whose sake must I continue this life?"
(RKR Part II p.105-106)

Tara pours out her anguish at the Feet of Rama:

Then, Tara turned to Rama and poured out her heart. "You sent my dear Lord, my very breath, to the next world. Do you want us, who are left behind, to live at the mercy of strangers? Is this the right thing for a noble person, a person devoted to right conduct, to be proud about? Is it appropriate? If you do not desire our progress, if you have no wish to alleviate our sorrow, then kill me and my son. The arrow that killed the mighty hero will not quail before a weak woman and a stripling lad. Let us join him in his journey." She fell at the feet of Rama and wept in inconsolable anguish.

Rama counsels and consoles Tara:

Rama said, "Tara, why do you weep so? You are a heroic wife. Do not behave in this manner, for it brings your role into infamy. Be calm. Control yourself. The body is a temporary phase. It is contemptible. Vali himself regarded this body as debased! Its fall, its end, might happen any day, it cannot be avoided. It is but an instrument to achieve the Supreme Goal and if that end is not kept in view and attained through it, the body is but a lump of coal whose destiny is the fire. Weeping for Vali as this body is

foolish, for the body⁷² is here. Do you then weep for the Atma that was in this body? That Atma is eternal. It cannot die or decay, diminish or disintegrate. Only those who have not realised the Atma principle suffer from the delusion that the body is themselves; until then, even the most learned are led into error. Being enamoured of the body as if it is you is ‘ignorance.’ Being aware of the Atma, which you really are is ‘wisdom.’ Getting the knowledge of the Atma is as precious a piece of good luck as getting a diamond in the dust. The Atma is the gemstone embedded in this mass of flesh. The body carries urine and faeces, bad odours and bad blood. It is pestered by pests and problems. Its decay cannot be arrested. It must die someday. The achievement that one can realise through it is its justification. That is the crown of human life. Your husband has achieved many heroic and honourable victories through his body. While ruling this kingdom, he protected and promoted his servants and faithful followers as if they were his very breath. He destroyed the Rakshasas. He had deep devotion towards God. But he inflicted injury on his brother. Besides that sin, he did not commit any other. His death at my hands was the consequence of that sin. Therefore, believe that it too has been washed away. Now, you have no reason to grieve.

⁷² The Beauty of Rama was the Beauty of Inner Peace, the Splendour that fills one when He is conscious of living in Dharma. Ramayana teaches also the need to give up the false identification with body. When Rama saw Tara wailing over the corpse of Vali, he gave her lessons on the evanescence of the body and the foolishness of identifying with that vehicle used by him for the purpose of his journey to Divinity. (*SSS Vol. IX p. 203-204*)

Sugriva crowned King:

When Tara heard these words of counsel and consolation wisdom dawned in her mind and she was calmed. Rama said that there should be no more delay. He asked Tara to go back and have the funeral rites for Vali performed by Sugriva. He advised Sugriva to bring up Angada with love and care. When the rites were over, he sent Lakshmana into the Capital City, and had Sugriva installed on the throne. (*RKRV Part II p.106-107*)

“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)

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10.5 ANGADA

ANGADA

Angada in the Indian Ramayana epic, is a Vanara, who helped Rama find his wife Sita and fight her abductor, Ravana. He was the son of Bali and Tara and the nephew of Sugriva. Angada and Tara are instrumental in reconciling Rama and his brother, Lakshmana, with Sugriva after Sugriva fails to fulfil his promise to help Rama find and rescue his wife. Together they are able to convince Sugriva to honour his pledge to Rama instead of spending his time carousing and drinking. Sugriva then arranges for Hanuman to help Rama and organises the monkey army that will battle Ravana's demonic host.

In his efforts to seek a peaceful solution, Rama sent several messengers to Ravana; Angada was one of them. Angada explained to Ravana that Rama had sent him as messenger to seek the release of Sita and that Ravana ought to heed this last appeal so that war could be averted. Angada tried every means to convince Ravana, but the ruler was dogged and firm to face a battle instead of returning Sita to Rama peacefully.

At Ravana's court, after Angada explained the divinity of lord Rama and the message he carried, Ravana paid no heed to it.

Angada then planted his foot firmly on the ground and challenged anybody in the courtroom to uproot his foot. If anybody were to accept the challenge and was successful, Rama would concede defeat and return without Sita. All the rakshasa commanders of Ravana's army and even his son Indrajit tried to lift Angada's leg but none succeeded. Feeling humiliated by this failure, an infuriated Ravana slowly walked towards Angada's planted foot and just as he was about to hold Angada's leg to attempt the challenge, Angada moved away and Ravana fell down. Angada explained that the challenge was for Ravana's commanders and not for Ravana. He told that Ravana was prepared to fall on his feet but instead he should choose to fall on the lord Rama's feet, for those are the ones that remove fear of cycle of life and death. He then picked up Ravana's crown which fell down on the ground and threw it out of the palace. Ravana ordered his men to kill Angada but then Angada took a jump and flew back to the place where the army was congregating.

When the vanaras saw the flying crowns approaching, they got frightened. But Rama knew that it was the crown of Ravana. Hanuman caught the flying crown in the air and placed it at Rama's feet.

In the war that followed, he killed Ravana's son Narantaka.

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

ANGADA ⁷³ : Vali's son, crown-prince. (*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

Vali asks Rama to crown Angada as Prince of Kishkindha

Vali declared his determination to give up his breath, and called his son to his presence. He said: “This fellow grew up until now as the lust-born son of this body. He is strong, virtuous, humble and obedient. Now I wish You would foster him as Your Love-deserving Son. I have placed him in Your hands.” With these words he placed the hands of his son in the hands of Rama. (*RKRV Part II p.105*)

Finally, Vali said, “O Rama! My life is ebbing away. Make a promise to me that you will make my son Angada, the crown prince of Kishkindha”. Rama agreed to this. (*SSB 2002 p.106*)

Rama drew Angada, the son, near Him, and blessed him, with great love. Pleased at the acceptance, Vali shed tears of joy. His eyes were fixed on the Divine Face before him. His eyes slowly closed in death. Will an elephant worry or take any notice of flowers that fall away from the garland round its neck? With the same unconcern, Vali too allowed his breath to slide away from him. (*RKRV Part II p.105*)

Rama fulfilled the promise He gave to Vali. He crowned Sugriva as the king and Angada as the crown prince. (*SSB 2002 p.106*)

⁷³ Also spelt as Angadha

SEARCH FOR SITA

Decision as to who could cross the ocean:

One day, during their journey, the monkeys sank in gloom and sighed, “Alas, of the period allotted to us by our Master, Sugriva, only two days remain. And we have not traced Sita!” Angada and the rest lamented their fate and were lost in despair. Tears rolled down their cheeks. They had come to the shore of the sea and were sad that not one of them could cross it to continue the search. So, they sat in groups on the sands and were pining in disappointment. Jambavantha, the old leader, counselled Angada in many ways. “Why do you grieve? We have put forward our best efforts. We have searched all places without the least dereliction of duty. We have not wasted a single moment in idling. We have not worried even about food and drink. We have been engaged ceaselessly in the search for Sita. Our Master and ruler, Sugriva, might not be a witness to our activities; but believe me, Rama is witnessing them! Therefore, Rama will not be a party to the infliction of any punishment on us. We have no reason to fear the anger of Sugriva. Since this is His Task, let us carry it out with His Name on our tongue and His Form in our minds.” (*RKRV Part II p.114*)

The Vanaras gathered around the Crown Prince of their kingdom, Angada. “Oh Prince,” they pleaded, “Search for some feasible means. Decide who amongst us has to attempt to leap over the ocean.” Then, Angada called together a full session of all the Vanaras and announced that he would like to know the capacity of each for this enterprise. At this, Vikata rose and said, “I can leap over thirty yojanas at the most.” Nila declared,

“Prince, I can manage to leap at one jump forty yojanas, but I regret I will not be able to exceed the distance by even a fingerbreadth.” Durdhara rose next and said that he could easily jump a distance of fifty yojanas. Nala came forward and with great flourishing of hands, he said he could jump sixty yojanas. While such competitive boasting and parading of skills were going on, Angada declared, “Listen, I can leap over this ocean once, but I have my doubts whether I would have enough strength left to leap back. One has not only to reach the other shore, one has to fight with the Rakshasas there if need arises. That would make me still weaker and I would have no strength left. I am afraid my resources won’t last long enough for all these three operations.” (*RKRV Part II p.119-120*)

Angada asks Hanuman to cross the ocean over to the land of Rakshasas:

When Angada spoke in these depressing terms, the leading Vanara elders rose as one and pleaded, “Prince, you are the heir-apparent to our kingdom. The discussion whether you are capable or not, to take up this mission is irrelevant. It is not right and proper that you should cross over to the land of Rakshasas. It is against the canons of royalty. This is a task which you have to assign to some servant of the kingdom. When you have millions of servants eager to do what you bid, it is not right that you should consider undertaking this task.” Jambavantha suggested that someone else might be charged with the errand and Angada looked around, and looking at Hanuman, he said, “Oh Son of the Wind-God, you are the dedicated servant of Rama. Your devotion is indeed deep. You were blessed first among all of us with the Darsan of Rama. Through your intelligence, diplomacy

and moral pressure, you established friendship between Rama and our ruler, Sugriva. And now, you are observing silence, when we are involved with difficulties in the execution of the mission of Rama. I find it difficult to understand the meaning of this silence.”

Angada extolled Hanuman still further and said, “There is no adventure that you cannot tackle successfully. You are strong, you are highly intelligent. You are endowed with all the virtues. Evaluate your own skills, capacities and excellences, and rise.” The words of Angada filled Hanuman with his erstwhile strength. He rose with a sudden gesture and said “I shall, this instant, leap over the ocean, enter Lanka, see Sita and come back. I have no other work than carrying out the command of Rama. How else can we make our lives worthwhile than by earning His Grace?” (*RKR V Part II p.120-121*)

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN RAVANA AND ANGADA, THE SON OF VALI, SENT AS AN ENVOY TO LANKA:

Angada as an Envoy to Ravana:

The Vanaras put up a nice camp for Rama and Lakshmana on the Suvela Hill. They prepared soft rests for them, heaping grass, leaves and flowers, and made them into nice beds. That night Rama spent with the Vanaras until dawn, with delightful talk and in pleasant companionship. When day brightened, he had his bath in the sea and he performed there, on the shore itself, the rituals prescribed. He called together the ministers of Sugriva



Figure 10: Angada goes as an envoy to Ravana

Source of the Photo

Artist Ravi Varma studio

Description The monkey prince Angad is first sent to give diplomacy one last chance (Ravi Varma studio, 1910's)

Date 1910

Source http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routes/data/bce_299_200/ramayana/attack/attack.html

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and other leaders and gave them instructions about the task ahead. Later, they met and agreed unanimously that Angada, the son of Vali and the Heir-apparent of the Vanara Kingdom, be sent as an Envoy to Ravana, before launching the siege of Lanka. Rama called Angada forward and told him, “Son, you are strong and virtuous. You have to go on a Mission from Rama to Ravana and advice Ravana cleverly and cautiously, softly and assuringly, without making him further enraged.” He was given directions about the tone and contents of what he had to tell Ravana. He took leave, after prostrating at the feet of Rama. While departing, he said, “Master! Pray bless me with the auspicious look of your eyes. I am indeed fortunate that I am entrusted with this work. Whatever might happen to me while executing it, I am ready to offer my very life to you.” Rama’s heart melted with compassion when he heard these words of Angada. Rama came forward, clasped Angada to his bosom and placed his palm on his head, showering blessings on him.

Angada is accosted by Ravana’s Son:

Angada then moved into the City, with Rama installed in his heart and his Form ever in his mind. He pushed aside everyone who alerted and stopped him on the way and displayed great self-confidence and courage. He encountered the son of Ravana on the way. The Rakshasa Prince accosted him and inquired, “Here, Oh Monkey! Who are you and wherefrom?” Angada replied, “I am Angada, Envoy of Rama.” At this, the Rakshasa raised his foot to kick Angada. But Angada was too quick for him. He caught him by the foot and raising him aloft twirled his body until he dashed him on the ground. The Rakshasas who witnessed this were struck with terror. They realised that the

monkey was of gigantic might and kept discreetly away. News spread that the monkey that had set Lanka aflame had returned and this created widespread confusion and fear. Angada noticed, wherever he turned, panic-stricken groups of Inhabitants were watching his movements. He had no need to ask any group to clear the path. They hurried out as soon as he was sighted. At last, he fearlessly stepped into the Audience Hall of Ravana himself. One of the guards carried the news of Angada's arrival in hot haste to Ravana. Ravana directed him to bring the Envoy to his presence and, accordingly, Angada was taken right before the Rakshasa Emperor. Angada saw Ravana as a conscious mountain, black in colour. His twenty hands were as the branches of a giant tree. He walked up to him with no trace of fear in his heart.

Angada replies to Ravana's question as to what the purpose of his visit was:

But all those present in that hall shuddered in their heart of hearts as they saw him enter and proceed. They were in a state of stupor. Ravana asked Angada who he was. Angada replied, "I am the Envoy of Rama." At this Ravana asked him the purpose of his visit. "Oh Ravana!" Angada began, "you and my father were friends of old. Therefore, with your welfare in view, I have come at the orders of Rama to give you some sound advice." Angada continued softly and persuasively, "You brought away the 'Mother of all the Worlds, the Daughter of Janaka.' You were unable to withstand pride or lust and greed. Well, let bygones be bygones. At least today, at this very moment, if you realise the fact of your iniquity and act as I am telling you, Rama will pardon you. Decide to do as I suggest, without delay. Or

else, with your own hand, you will bury in this soil your clan and your kingdom.” When Angada spoke thus, Ravana exclaimed, “Oh vilest of Vanaras! You are indeed a fool. Perhaps you do not know that I am a foe of your ‘God.’ What is your name? What was the relation between me and your father? Don’t be blind to the consequences of your speech.”

Angada cautions Ravana about the consequences of opposing Rama:

Angada laughed outright at this outburst. He said, “Oh Monarch of Rakshasas. My name is Angada. My father’s name is Vali. There was friendship between you two.” Hearing the words that Angada spoke, Ravana was rendered stiff and silent. But he overcame the reaction soon and said, “True, true, there was, I remember, a monkey of that name in olden days. Oh, are you his son? Hello, Angada! You seem to have been born in that clump as a spark of fire in order to destroy it?” Angada laughed aloud at the excited reply from Ravana. He said, “Ravana, your days have come to an end. You will soon be reaching your old friend Vali. He can tell you there the consequence of opposing Rama.

Equipped with twenty eyes, you are nevertheless blind. Burdened with twenty appendages called ears, you are deaf. Caught in the thick night of ignorance, you strut in pride, proclaiming yourself great! The tribe you plan to save will be effaced. That is the plan. Sinner! Vile Barbarian! Villain blinded by pride! Demon!” When Angada gnashed his teeth in anger and poured on his head the stream of abuse, Ravana rose from his throne in a trice and shouted, “You monkey, you destroyer of your own race! Since I know and recognise the rules of political morality, I am bearing

in silence your impertinence, beware. There is a limit to my patience.” Ravana stared at Angada in fiery anger. But Angada was not at all affected by that demonstration. He retorted, “Oh Rakshasa Monarch! I have heard much of your righteousness, your virtues, and your political morality.

Consider what wonderful achievements your righteousness has affected. Kidnapping the wife of another person, devouring the messenger duly sent by your elder brother, Kubera. These are the highlights of your political morality!

You are boasting of these without a trace of shame. You dare talk of your virtues and your morality? You set fire to the tail of the messenger who came to your kingdom, and yet you proclaim without shame that you are bound by rules. Such is the behaviour of Rakshasas. You have no right at all to utter the word political morality, with your tongue. You are the vilest sinner.”

Ravana’s reply:

When Angada was replying, without break or hesitation, the courtiers who filled the Audience Hall were aghast with fear, wondering what was in store for them. Ravana resumed his talk. He said, “Listen, monkey! Is there a single hero in your camp who can stand up against me in battle? Your Lord is broken down in sorrow at separation from his wife. He is pining and pining every day. His brother is affected and weakened by the sight of the agony. And, Sugriva? He hates you and is opposed to you, since you are the heir to the kingdom. Like a pair of birds fighting on the edge of a river, you will both drop into the flood someday.

Both of you have your eyes on the same Kingdom. How then can you fight wholeheartedly and successfully against me? My brother, upon whom you seem to rely, is a coward. Jambavantha, another of your leaders, is too old to be of any use. Nala and Nila are but engineers, unaware of the art of wielding swords.”

Angada interrupted this tirade and cut in with his own. “Ravana! One tiny monkey entered your City and set it on flame. Did any fool believe that it was ever possible? Now you, who know it is true, deny that the monkey is a valiant fighter. I am not in the least affected by anger when you declare that there is no one in our camp who can defeat you in battle. Yes, the texts on morality lay down that either friendship or enmity has to be only with equals. Will anyone praise a lion for destroying a frog? Surely, the attempt by Rama to kill you is too low for his status and dignity. Killing such a mean contemptible foe is something that will reduce his majesty. The rules that lay down the conduct and characteristics of the Kshatriya caste to which he belongs are high and noble. You are a vicious, vile, vulgar sinner, who must meet death at the hands of mere monkeys only.”

Ravana burst into desperate laughter. “Nasty monkeys! You dance in glee and jump shamelessly hither and thither, as the person who holds the rope tied round your waist commands. You learn the tricks he teaches and repeat them whenever he orders you, so that he may collect a few coins from the onlookers.”

Angada pours abuses on Ravana:

Angada could not put up with these sarcastic remarks. He ejaculated, “You seem to know only about animals. You have

not cared to know about the Lord, about God, about Destiny and about Fate. Why, have not monkeys taught you more than you know? They have demolished your parks, they have killed your son, and they have reduced your City into a pile of ash. Yes, they have to perform one more feat, yet. They have to administer proper punishment to you. We have allowed you to escape the fate that you must meet. I believed that your heart will be cured by downright advice and harsh truth. But no, you have no sense of shame. You have no idea of repentance. You have no trace of morality, no habit of rectitude. What a pity! You are still gnashing your teeth in anger at Vibhishana and calling him names, like coward and traitor. You are burdening the earth by the weight of your body. The sooner you are eliminated the better. You are worse than the dogs that infest your streets. They do not have the vices you suffer from. You will soon realise that their lives are better than yours.” Angada poured abuse on Ravana regardless of convention and manners.

Ravana’s tirade:

Ravana could not digest such fiery admonitions. “Angada! Know that I am the hero, the redoubtable stalwart, who lifted the Kailasa peak by sheer physical power and courage. This Ravana is the person who laid, not flowers but his own heads, plucked by him from his body, as offerings at the Feet of Siva. This is the devotee whose might has been acknowledged by Siva himself. This is the warrior whose name strikes terror in the bravest, whose picture spreads panic. Stop your prattle praising yourself and your patrons.”

But Angada was in no mood to stop. He continued his onslaught. “Oh you conceited fool! Don’t chatter away like this. Use your breath for some good purpose. Sing some songs in praise of Rama. Surrender to Him. Or else, the arrow of Rama will make your heads leap like balls from the shoulder where they are now resting. And the Vanaras will gleefully kick them about, as in a ball game. I happen to be the messenger from Sugriva, our Ruler. I have, unfortunately, no orders from Sri Rama; and I do not desire to deprive them the chance, or else, I would have put an end to your life in a trice and cast your carcass into the ocean.”

Ravana’s crowns roll on the ground:

Angada grew into a fierce phenomenon as he uttered this threat. Like the lion, he slapped the ground with his palms. The earth shook so hard at the impact of those blows that the crowns on Ravana’s ten heads shook and fell on the floor. Ravana rolled from his throne, but he recovered balance very soon. Angada collected four of the ten, and threw them with such great force and sure aim that they fell into the camp of Rama, right within the Presence. The Vanaras there were struck with wonder at the strange articles and they described to each other the excellences and beauties of the jewelled crowns. Rama knew what they were. He said that, while coming over, they appeared like Rahu and Kethu, which cause eclipses.

Meanwhile, Ravana commanded, “Bind this monkey. Don’t allow him to depart. Eat him up,” and hastily retired to the inner apartments. Angada shouted, “Shame on you! Why all this boast of strength and prowess? Go, dip yourself in the depths of the sea and hold your breath until you die. Woman stealer! Fool! Lust-

ridden lout! I shall pluck your tongue out of your mouth on the battlefield and throw it as food for crows. Be warned.” Angada was gnashing his teeth in hateful anger, when Ravana turned back and called on the Rakshasas in the Hall, “Lift him by the legs and throw him on the floor. Splinter his head.” At this, Meghanada rose from his seat and holding Angada by his legs pulled him with great force in order to make him fall. Many others rushed forward to help him. However many they were, they could not move the feet even a wee bit. They only rolled on the ground, full of humiliation and unable to decide what to do next. Then, Devakantaka tried various holds to make the feet move. He too failed ignominiously. At last, Ravana himself attempted the impossible task. He held Angada by his legs and wanted to lift him and throw him forcibly on the floor. Angada laughed at Ravana’s foolishness. He said, “Ravana! No, these are not the feet you have to hold. Place your hands on the Feet of Rama, in the genuine gesture of surrender. That will liberate you from fear and bondage.”

With these words, Angada shook his feet in order to loosen the hold. The impact of that gesture was so unexpected and so strong that Ravana hit the floor and lost consciousness. His glory and splendour were destroyed. The sense of shame spread over his faces and he looked like the moon in broad daylight, pale and poor. Angada looked at his plight and felt that he should not continue his dialogue with the coward. Rama, he remembered, had told him only to administer some good advice to Ravana. “This fellow will not yield to good counsel, he will not realise his error and correct himself. He sticks to his vicious nature. War alone can give effective cure.” Deciding thus, Angada left for the

sacred proximity of the Feet of Rama. Reaching there, he submitted a report of all that had happened. (*RKRV Part II p.189-197*)

THE SIEGE

With Rama in their hearts, the Vanaras lay siege:

When Rama heard from Angada what had happened at Lanka and learnt from him the attitude and alertness of the enemy, he 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.

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. (*RKRV Part II p.203-204*)

Ravana tries to perform the Patalahoma – unsuccessful:

Ravana ordered that a special destruction-yielding, victory-ensuring ritual called Patalahoma be performed so that he could defeat the enemy at his door..... Vibhishana approached Rama

saying that this ceremony had to be defiled and desecrated, that if the Homa was allowed to reach its conclusion, without interruption, it would be very difficult to defeat Ravana..... On the orders of Rama, Angada and Hanuman proceeded to the place of Ritual to disturb it..... Even the slightest movement or distraction of attention would make Ravana unfit and unholy, so that the Homa he was to perform for achieving victory would be rendered infructuous..... Angada kicked Ravana and took liberties..... Ravana became fiercely angry, catching hold of a few monkeys, he twirled them fast over his head and tried to smash them on the ground.... But a regular scramble and struggle ensued between Ravana and the Vanaras..... The ritual ceremony he had planned could not be gone through.... Ravana was sunk in grief⁷⁴. (RKR Part II p.251-252)

Angada kills Akampa:

Angada led the Vanaras against Akampa, and he was able to kill the Rakshasa general that very day. (RKR Part II p.221)

RAMA’S CORONATION:

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana fell at the feet of the Mothers... Rama embraced Bharatha and praised his brother for his steadfast devotion and affection... A happy reunion... Sugriva, Nala, Nila, Angada, Hanuman and others assumed beautiful bodies for the festive occasion. (RKR Part II p.277)

⁷⁴ See chapter, *Ravana* - **Ravana orders Patalahoma and the Vanaras defile and destroy it:**

Vibhishana and Vanara heroes stayed six months in the Capital... Rama addressed them that “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”--- 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... All bowed their heads and fell at those lovely feet. Rama lifted them gently and embraced them with great affection... Rama blessed them and gave wise counsel (RKRV Part II p.285-288)

Rama announced his desire to celebrate Aswamedha Yaga... It ensures the destruction of varieties of grief... Sumantra invited Leading Citizens and officials and asked them to decorate the City and erect Mantaps.... Vashishta was informed of the arrangements.... Vashishta advised Rama to send news to Janaka so that he could attend with his Queen and kinsmen.... Send invitations to Brahmins and Maharishis... Official messengers visited kingdoms far and wide presented invitations to Mithila... Jambavantha, Angada, Sugriva, Nala, Nila and other Vanara leaders arrived. Ascetics and monks came to the City in

groups.... They were all welcomed and accommodated with due regard to their spiritual eminence..... (RKR V Part II p.314-318)

ENDING THE PLAY⁷⁵

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. *(RKR V Part II p.336)*

⁷⁵ Under Section, *Rama* See Chapter, *Rama's Reign- The Reign Of Righteousness - Rama Rajyam - ENDING THE PLAY*

11. NOTABLE SEERS AND SAGES IN RAMAYANA

Bharat is the motherland of many noble souls. It is therefore essential for all the *Bharatiyas* to understand the sacred history of Bharat. But, today, no one seems to be interested in knowing the history and culture of Bharat. The culture of Bharat is based on *dharma*. The word *dharma* has been misinterpreted as religion. *Dharma* is like a vast ocean, whereas religion is like a pond. The culture of Bharat is pure, unsullied, eternal, and immortal. In olden days, the children were taught the sacred values of Indian culture right from the age of five.

Their education would begin with the sacred *mantras* like *Aum Namah Sivaya* and *Aum Namo Narayana*. But in the modern education system, the divine names such as Siva and Narayana have no place. The children are taught meaningless rhymes like “Ba. Ba. black sheep”. People are not making efforts to understand the efficacy of these *mantras*.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

11.1 INTRODUCTION

NOTABLE SEERS AND SAGES IN RAMAYANA: AN INTRODUCTION

India provides a rich heritage of philosophy and practical spirituality, a galaxy of eminent saints and seers immortalised by poets of pure renown. (*SSS Vol.5 p.173*)

This motherland of Bharat has given birth to many noble souls who attained great name and fame in all the continents of the world. Many sages and seers of Bharat have been sanctifying their time by propagating Rama *thathwa* (principle of Rama) since ancient times. The Ramayana belongs to *Treta Yuga*. Though thousands of years have passed, yet the *Ramayana* is being read with reverence in every village and every hamlet. (*SSS Vol.39 p.71*)

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 *Aadhithyahridhaya*, the 'Heart of the Sun,' directing him to recite it whenever victory appeared to slip out his grasp! These counsellors steered the kingdom safe. A rain was needed to put down the conflagration lit by the wicked cousins, which was fed by oil (*Karna*) and wind (*Sakuni*), and so, Krishna arranged for a Rain of Arrows, at Kurushetra. If the ruler bases his rule on the faith that God resides in all, and that every individual is to be res as such, then there will be no discontent or discord. That is the Vedantic foundation on which aspects of living have to be built. (*SSS Vol. 7 p.143*)

I need not say that this is a great chance for you, a *Sumuhurtham*, as they say, an event of auspiciousness. A State will have a Constitution and a set of great laws; *Sanathana Dharma* is the law and the *Vedas* are the Constitution of the State of Man. These were laid down by sages who "saw" them in their moments of ecstatic intuition; that is why they are called *Seers*. Hence the *Vedas* are called *A-pourusheya* (not ascribable to any particular author). They are named *Sruthi*, that which is heard, remembered, and 'held as a treasure in the memories of men. The *Vedas* are their own authority; just as the eye is the judge of what the eye reveals. You cannot smell a thing and judge its colour. So the *Vedas* have to be judged by the *Vedas* only; the experience of the sages has to be tested by sages who seek that experience

through the processes laid down in the *Vedas*; and, in every case the process is followed, the experience is won, correctly and dearly as described. The *Vedas* have to be practised; that is the purpose of these revelations. Merely learning them by rote is of no use. The *Uttara mimamsa*⁷⁶ section provides the knowledge necessary to liberate oneself from bondage and blindness. That is called *Brahmajnana*, for, when one reaches a certain stage in *sadhana*, he realises that all this is identical with *Brahman*, which is cause and effect, being and becoming, both. The *Bharat bhumi* (land of Bharat) which is inherently *Yoga bhumi* and *Thyaga bhumi* (land of godliness and sacrifice) is being dragged along the tracks of other *Bhoga bhumi* (lands of enjoyment), and putting on the paraphernalia of worldly happiness. This is the path of ignorance, of hatred, of greed, of wickedness, and competition. What the *Rishis* laid down is the best, for, they trained themselves to be impartial and detached. The teachings of the *Vedas* were explained and elaborated in the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavatha, and in the commentaries by Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhvacharya. Even those who were the custodians of *Vedic* learning have now neglected it and taken to lesser studies. (*SSS Vol.4 p.163*)

***Vedic* hymns have great potency**

The Vedas and *Sastras*, since they were won by penance and travail by sages and seers who were interested only in the welfare of humanity and the liberation of Man are the greatest

⁷⁶ Uttara Mimamsa (Uttara Meemaamsa): Later Mimamsa Vedantic philosophy, as distinguished from earlier Mimamsa, which concerned itself with rituals. By Veda Vyasa. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

repositories of *hitha*. They advise that Man must regulate his 'out-look' and develop the 'in-look'; the inner reality is the foundation on which the outer reality is built. It is like the inner wheel in the car, which directs the outer wheels. Know that the basic reality is God, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent. Become aware of it and stay in that awareness always. Whatever the stress and the storm, do not waver from that Faith. Or you can earn that awareness by reminding yourselves of it with every breath of yours. How you can so remind yourselves, you may ask. By means of any one of His Names, any Name that is fragrant with Divine Perfume, any Name that is reminiscent of His Beauty. His Grace, and His power. (*SSS Vol.06 Second Edition p.45-46*)

The hymns of the *Rig Veda* have been used down the ages to sanctify widely different events and experiences of man, spiritual and apparently secular. The distinction is artificial, for all of life has to be spiritualised. When the boy is initiated into *Vedic* studies or the recitation of the *Gayatri* and other *mantras*, when someone has to be blessed on some happy occasion, when a wedding has to be ceremoniously performed with the invocation of God, and when the body is buried or burnt after the soul has left, the *Rig Vedic* hymns are chanted. They have great potency and arouse beneficial thoughts on reciters and listeners.

The seers who saw the hymns of the *Veda*, chanted and communicated them. They were 403 in number. Vashishta is the foremost of them, with 104 hymns which he visualised. There is a story about the sage Bharadwaja who sought to visualise all that has to be known through the *Vedic* Voice of God. He prayed

to the Lord of Heaven, Indra, to give him longer and longer leases of life but Indra, after obliging him more than once, laughed at his tenacity and said, pointing to a huge mountain range facing him, "All that you have mastered so far is but three handfuls of sand, from these peaks. How can you ever master the *Veda* fully?" But, the sage did not wince. He said, "I shall bear the burden gladly". Burden in Sanskrit is *Bhaara* and bearing is *Bhara*. So, he was known as Bharadwaja. Vamadeva and Agasthya are the other seers of note, whose visions helped the origination of 56 and 27 hymns or sookthas. Viswamitra has contributed another 56. (*SSS Vol.15 p.269-270*)

The teachings – a way of Life:

The teachings of the sages and seers of this land all centred on the way of life, the discipline in daily practice, the modes of family and social behaviour, the attitudes, and impulses, the obligations of community life, the bonds of service and sympathy. They emphasise practical aspects of *Vedanta*; in fact, there is no other *Vedanta*. Its purpose is to cleanse the mind, to sharpen the intellect, to purify the emotions, to concentrate the thinking faculty so that the reality could be experienced in its full clarity. Liberation from the blows of joy and grief can come only through the realisation of that reality, which is One and Indivisible. The removal of the moss that floats thick on the surface of the lake reveals the water beneath; the removal of the dust that lies thick upon the mirror enables you to see yourself. When the person sees himself as an image, it is only partial truth; when he knows he is the person, not an image, it is the truth. The bimba (object) must know itself as the *bimba*; the I must become aware of the I; that is self-realisation. The eye can see the star

that is billions of light years away; but, it cannot see itself! The eye must see the eye, so that it can claim to have self-realisation, a vision of itself as it truly is. (*SSS Vol.6 p.242*)

Knowing that the Granter of Joy to humanity, the Mentor of human morals, the Leader of the Solar line, the Dweller in the Heaven of Eternal Bliss, will take birth in a royal line, Sages who had the foresight to anticipate events, gained entry into the durbars of rulers so that they may experience the bliss of contact with the Incarnation, when It happens. They feared they may not get such access later, that they may miss the Bliss they could well garner. So, they profited by their vision of the future and established themselves in the royal capital, in the thick of the community, longing for the Advent. “To this venerable group belonged Vashishta, Viswamitra, Garga, Agasthya and the other sages (rishis). They had no wants. They were monarchs of renunciation. They sought nothing from anyone. They were ever content. They appeared in the audience halls of the emperors of those days, not for polemics and the pomp of punditry or for collecting the costly gifts offered to such disputants and guests, or for decorating themselves with the burdensome title those patrons confer on the persons they prefer. They craved rather for the *Darsan* (Bliss of the Vision) of the Lord and for a chance to uphold Dharma (Righteousness) in human affairs. They had no other objective. (*RKR V Part I p.7-8*)

During the course of Rama’s stay on the Chitrakoota mountain, Rama had many deliberations with Sages and Seers. 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. (*SSB 1996 p.42-43*)

Bharat has known how to exploit the mine of Divine Bliss which lies in the heart of man. The seers had said that if the Bhoomata, Gomata, Nijamata and Vedamata---mother-land sacred cow, real mother and Vedas---are revered and used as best as one can, then one would have happiness here and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. (*Discourse at Bukkapatnam, 18-7-1961*)

You must express your gratitude. You have to pay four kinds of debt in this world: debt to your mother, debt to your father, debt to the saints and seers and the debt to God. Since your mother has given you her blood, her life and strength, and is responsible for your birth, you must show gratitude by respecting her. You must show gratitude to your father, who gives you money, education and protection. The *rishis* or saints teach you human qualities and so you must show gratitude to them. Ultimately, God is responsible for all these; so, you must show your gratitude to God. (*SSB 1973 p.178*)

Great sages like Vashishta, Vamana, Jamadagni, Viswamitra, Gautama and Parasara were among the *Saptarishis* who achieved the distinction because of their spiritual greatness. (*SSS Vol.18 p.147-148*)

Scientific attainments of the sages:

Probing further and further into the scientific attainments of the sages of ancient India, the construction of Vimanas, vehicles capable of flying in space, is described by Sages Bharadwaja.

Mental Science had advanced so much that they could reproduce what had happened or predict what would happen. The Science of Medicine was highly developed in India. It was Sage Bharadwaja who taught this science for the benefit of mankind. Sage Atreya took up the task of propagating this science and technique of healing. Saint Charaka compiled all the discoveries into a Samhita or 'collection' named after him. It deals elaborately with the diagnosis of diseases, methods of healing and cure, foetal development and other essential but not easily discoverable facts of medical sciences. The doctors proficient in that science could, in those ancient years, surgically remove or correct various diseased parts of body when the illness could not be cured by drugs. Saint Susruta has written in his compendium on many surgical processes. This text has been discovered and is available for study. Dhanvantari, Nagarjuna and other sages have brought to light many other medical discoveries of Ancient India, made by adherents of Vedic tradition of scientific research. There are also many valuable texts on ethics, jurisprudence and other social sciences which are invaluable treasures for all times, like the Dharma Sastra of Manu and Nyaya Sastra of Gautama. (*Sathya Sai Vahini p185*)

Because in those ancient days there were sacred people who understood the strength of such *mantras*, it was possible for them to hold the entire world in their palms. There is a small story for this. Uddalaka had a daughter by name Sujatha. She was married to a great scholar by name of Ekapada, who was happily spending his time teaching *Vedas* to his disciples. While the husband was thus teaching *Vedas*, the wife was also engaged herself in the work connected with the teaching of *Vedas* or by

helping her husband. Sujatha who was spending her time in this manner learnt the proper accent and pronunciation of the *Vedic mantras*. Every time a mistake was made, the baby in the womb was saying that it was a mistake. Uddalaka was enraged that a baby inside the womb was already correcting him and cursed that the baby would be born as a crooked one. In course of time, a son was born to Sujatha and the boy had eight crooked curves on his body because of the curses of Uddalaka. The name of the son was Ashtaavakra. When Sujatha was in her ninth month, Uddalaka left home to go to the court of Janaka to participate in a *Vedic* argument, attain victory and thereby earn money.

In those days, the *Rishis* were not in the habit of saving for the future because they realised that life is a transient thing and they were not thinking far ahead of the present. In the present day, we try to see far into the future and even as the son is born, we deposit money in the bank to send him abroad for higher education without giving a thought to whether the boy would even live that long and even if he lived whether he would be able to learn that much. Therefore, Ekapada set out to get some money for the expenses of the baby. When he learnt of *Vedic* argument in King Janaka's court, he went there. However, due to bad luck, Ekapada lost the argument which he had with the other scholars and having lost the argument he became a bonded person at the court of King Janaka. After some time Sujatha realised that her husband was not coming back. At this time she gave birth to the son, Ashtaavakra. At the same time Uddalaka's wife also gave birth to a son called Svetaketu. Svetaketu and Ashtaavakra were thus cousins. Uddalaka brought Ashtaavakra and Sujatha to his house, as Sujatha's husband was not there.

From that day Svetaketu and Ashtaavakra grew up together as very close companions and Ashtaavakra thought that Uddalaka was his father. One day when Ashtaavakra was sitting on the lap of Uddalaka, Svetaketu came and asked him to get down and sit on his own father's lap if he wanted to. At this Ashtaavakra ran to his mother and asked for the true story of his birth and for the name of his father. Sujatha then told him the entire story and on hearing this news, both Svetaketu and Ashtaavakra went to the court of King Janaka and attained victory in the arguments there. In this manner they liberated Ekapada and brought him back home. The mother Sujatha was very pleased and happy and said that although many fathers had got their sons released or given birth to them, this was a rare case where the son gave back a father and she praised him for giving her such a gift. The child in the womb got these qualities only because of the power of the *mantra*. (SSB 1974 p.96)

Role of sages in Royal courts:

We recognise the inner meaning of the word *rishi*. For that individual who can experience the *Vedas* and Brahman directly, the name *Rishi* is appropriate. One who can explain and expound the essential form of the *Veda* can be called a *Rishi*. Our *Puranas* have been telling us that Vashishta is the first *Rishi*. Vashishta had the aspect of Brahman in him, and he was called the *Brahmarishi*. Viswamitra, also, wanted to acquire this name of a *Brahmarishi* and he himself undertook great penance and then acquired the aspect of Brahman. As a result of his penance, Viswamitra could have the vision of Brahman. As soon as he had the vision of Brahman, he was addressed as *Brahmarishi* by Brahma Himself. Viswamitra was not satisfied and he told

Brahma that he was not satisfied by his merely being addressed as a *Brahmarishi*. He said that he wanted to directly experience the *Om* and the *vashatkara* which the *Veda* has explained. Viswamitra understood that by getting merely the name of *Brahmarishi* he was not going to get the aspect of *Brahmarishi*. He would truly become a *Brahmarishi* only when he grasped fully the meaning of the sound *Om* and of *Veda*.

Vashishta had a title which meant that Vashishta had understood all that was known to the *Suras*, the sacred people, and Vashishta was known as the head of all these sacred people. It is quite easy to call oneself by the name *Brahmarishi*, but it is very difficult to get the qualities of a *Brahmarishi*. If one wants to acquire the aspect of *Brahmarishi*, one should merge in the Brahman and become identical with Brahman. Because Viswamitra had surrendered everything to Brahma, these aspects were taught to Viswamitra by Brahma Himself. If one is able to get the grace of Brahma, then everything will be under control. If you are far away from the grace of Brahman, all the evil planets will begin to influence you. Viswamitra was one who had no acquaintance whatsoever with the contents of the *Veda*. He did not understand the aspect of *Om*. In spite of this, Brahman himself taught him these things because of His grace. *Sakthipata* was given to Viswamitra by the Lord and we have to examine the meaning of this word. *Sakthipata* means that the *guru* hands over in one shower all the capacities to the disciple. This, however, is not the correct meaning. When we make this statement, it means that there is a *guru* and there is a disciple to whom the *Sakthi* is being handed down. It is in contradiction to the statement, “*Sarvam Brahma mayam*” (Brahman is immanent in all). This *Sakthipata*

is something that is given only when there is deservedness. It is not given where there is no deservedness. In all individuals this *Sakthi* is present in a hidden manner and is in a latent form. What the guru does is simply to remove the veil of ignorance which is hiding the power that is intrinsically present. He does not hand out anything new.

The aspect of Brahman is not something which can be given by one to another. But today, because of the influence of Kali, it looks as if someone pays for this and someone else receives payment and sells it or transfers it to a disciple. This bliss is such that one can only experience it. If we do what we should do and adopt the path that we should adopt, then naturally the strength of Brahman will automatically come to us. Because the ancient scholars of our country have been describing Brahman as something which is unattainable and indescribable, our people always felt discouraged and disappointed. In fact, they have been abandoning attempts to understand this aspect of Brahman. To explain this aspect of Brahman, they have been using inappropriate and confusing words.

If we ask any of the ancient scholars to tell us the meaning of the word Brahman, they simply use various words, the meaning of which they themselves do not know. These are not the right type of interpretations. It is very easy to recognise the aspect of Brahman. It is even more easy to experience Brahman. In the absence of knowledge about the methodology of understanding Brahman, man is unable to recognise what is right in front of him. He is groping in the dark.

What Brahma did to Viswamitra was to simply remove the clouds that have been hiding the strength that was present in Viswamitra intrinsically. The *thapas* (austerities) which Viswamitra went through gave him the *darshan* of Brahma, and then Brahma enabled him to realise the strength which was already present in him. He taught Viswamitra to recognise the presence of Brahman everywhere and told him to sing about the grace of the Lord and about Brahma's presence everywhere and then he disappeared. So the aspect of Brahman is not something which is separate or distinctive but is present everywhere. It is not a material item which has some specific features. It is *parartha* (spirit) and not *padartha* (matter, object). It is something present everywhere.

There are many names for Brahman. This aspect of Brahman can be called as *Vakpati* or *Vachaspati* or *Brihaspati*. These are identical and synonymous names for Brahman. We may get a doubt as to why Brahman should have so many different names. In our own houses, we are worshipping God with a thousand names and each of these names refers to a particular quality of the Lord. We may get a doubt as to whether each one of these thousand names is appropriate to the Lord or not and whether they really signify a true aspect of the Lord. In our daily life we are experiencing the significance of these different names. When there is a householder who is the head of a family, we know that the son comes and addresses him as father, while the daughter-in-law addresses him as father-in-law and the grandson addresses him as grandfather and the wife will address him as 'My dear husband'. Here we see that because he has established different

types of connections, he is addressed by different names by different people.

Only one who is clearly above the concept of name and form can be called *Brahmarishi*. There are cases of people who are in the stage of a *Brahmarishi* but for the sake of the prosperity of the world, they will be doing certain things. They do such things, not because they do not have the aspect of equality in them. Today in the world there are several people who go by the name *Brahmarishis*. There are also several *yogis*, *Rishis*, *Maharishis* and *Yogeswaras*. But these people are not recognising nor possessing the qualities that are essential for deserving these titles. The meaning and the significance of the word *Yoga* was being expounded to you by several people in the past few days. How can individuals who do not get control over their own mind get control over other things? When we are not able to divert our mind from bad desires, how can we call ourselves *Yogis* and *Yogeswaras*? It is such people who are bringing disgrace and misunderstanding on the true meaning of the word *yogi*. (*SSB 1974 p. 43-51*)

Adharva is one of several names for *Parabrahma* who is also known by the name *Swaha*. The meaning of the word *Adharva* is something which is steady and unchanging. In addition to this, in the *Vedas* it is also known as *Prana-atma*⁷⁷ or *Prajapati*. The *Atharvana Veda* has declared that this *Adharva* was the first to generate fire. The *Rishis* first used this fire generated by

⁷⁷ Prana-atma (Praana-aathma). Superconsciousness that activates the vital airs. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Parabrahma for their rituals and ceremonies and gave names like Brahma, Vashishta, Prajapati, and Brihaspati and so on. In this way while performing the sacrifice, they recognised the importance of *Atharva*—the source of the fire—and also the aspects that were implied in these names given to persons functioning as *Rithwiks*. This *Atharva* has been installed as the basis in many places of origin and used as the basis for the prosperity of the world. In the context of the name Prajapati, *Atharva* was understood as *Atharva Veda* and in the context of *Rithwiks* some other aspects were also recognised. These *Vedas* were propagated in the world through the name of Prajapati. For all the *mantras* in the *Vedas*, there is a beginning and an end. The sound that is uttered in the beginning and in the end is called *Pranava*. That this *Pranava* is the same as *Atharva* has been said in the *Atharva Veda*. (SSB 1974.p.99)

All the *rishis* knew that Rama was an *Avatar* of God; but in order that the story of *Ramayana* may progress, they did not give this secret out to others. Viswamitra knew very well that Rama was an *Avatar*. Bharadwaja and Vashishta also knew very well that Rama was an *Avatar*. But if they gave out the truth, then the main purpose for which Rama had become an *Avatar* would not be achieved. In the same manner, it is not possible for any *Avatar* to proclaim to the world that the *Avatar* is come, and, if so, for what purpose. That is the *maya* of God. Yasoda, the mother, even after she had the vision of all creation in the open mouth of Lord Krishna, yet on account of *maya* she forgot the divine vision and she began to think that she was the mother and that Krishna was her son. In the same manner, Vashishta, Viswamitra and all other *rishis* kept the secret of Rama. But when they were

alone and when they got together, they were singing the glory of Rama amongst themselves. When the *rishis* were sitting alone, amongst themselves they used to describe the qualities of the Lord and they said, “Can we understand you, Oh Lord? Can we explain what you are, Oh Lord? You are smaller than the smallest thing, you are larger than the largest thing, you are present in all the 84 lakhs of different living *jivas*. How can we understand you and explain to others what you are?” (*SSB 1977 p.62-63*)

Suka said to King Parikshit: The kings too in those days were immersed in thoughts divine! They approached the hermits and sages in their retreats in order to discover from them the means of making their subjects happy and content. Often they invited them to their palaces and consulted them about ways and means of good government. Those were the days when there were sages with no attachment to self, and scholars with no craving for power. Such were the men who tended advice to the kings. As a consequence, there was no lack of food or clothing, of housing or good health, for people of the realm. All days were festival days. All doors were decorated with green festoons. The ruler felt that his most sacred duty was the fostering of his people’s welfare. The subjects too felt that the ruler was the heart of the body politic. They had full faith the he was as precious as their own hearts. They valued him as such; they revered him and paid him homage of gratitude. (*RKR Part I p.8*)

The words that come out of the Vedas refer to and contain in themselves the names of all forms and for this reason it also has a name ‘Bibarthi’. This has been explained in Manu-smrithi by

saying all the Jivas have the aspect of Bibarthis in them. Thus, identity of the aspect with the Brahman follows. In this sequence, the identity between the Veda and the word 'rishi' has been established as the very first step. While expanding the meaning of the word 'rishi', we need to take account of the aspect of the Vedas. In this context, we recognise the inner meaning of the word 'rishi'. For the individual who can experience the Vedas and Brahman directly, the name 'rishi' is appropriate. One who can explain and expound the essential form of the Veda can be called a 'Rishi'. Our Puranas have been telling us that Vashishta is the first rishi. Vashishta had the aspect of Brahman in him and he was called Brahma rishi.

Vashishta had a title which meant that Vashishta had understood all that was known to Suras, the sacred peoples and Vashishta was known as the head of all these sacred peoples. It is quite easy to call oneself by the name Brahma rishi but it is very difficult to get the qualities of a Brahma rishi. If one wants to acquire the aspect of Brahma rishi, One should merge in the Brahman and become identical with Brahman. (*SSB 1974 p.43-44*)

All the great saints knew very well that Ramachandra was the incarnation of God. Yet they would not communicate this information to others. They were conducting themselves in a manner which indicated that Ramachandra was an ideal human being, who came for the purpose of teaching ideals to people. These great saints were regarding Rama as an ideal human being, but knew very well that He was God, Himself. In such circumstances, it is not possible for any human being today to

discuss the right and wrong of what took place at that time. Divinity is something which one cannot establish or understand easily. (*SSB 1977 p.128*)

“Through the unremitting practice of Truth, Righteousness, and Fortitude, the Divinity quiescent in the individual has to be induced to manifest itself in daily living, transforming it into the joy of truly loving.” “Know the Supreme Reality, breathe It. Bathe in It. Live in it. Then it becomes all of you and you become fully it.”

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

11.2 AGASTHYA

AGASTHYA

Agasthya⁷⁸ is also generally credited with uncovering many mantras of the Rig Veda, the earliest and most revered Hindu scripture, in the sense of first having the mantras revealed in his mind by the Supreme Brahman. Agasthya is also the author of Agasthya Samhita. One story about Agasthya goes that once the Kalakeyas (a clan of Asuras) had taken refuge in the Cosmic Ocean, so that it was difficult for the Devas to vanquish them, due to which they went to Sage Agasthya for help. After hearing the Devas, the sage drank the entire ocean water and held it within him, until the demons were destroyed

Adityahṛdayam is a hymn associated with Aditya or the Sun God and was recited by the sage Agasthya to Rama on the battlefield before fighting with Ravana. This historic hymn starts at the beginning of the duel between Rama and Ravana. Agasthya teaches Rama, who is fatigued after the long battle with various warriors of Lanka, the procedure of worshiping the Sun god for strength to defeat the enemy and asks Rama to Worship the Sun God, the Lord of the Universe with concentrated mind. Muttering this praise (as many as) three times, one will come out victorious in combats. You will (be able to) make short of Ravana this (very) moment, O mighty –armed On. ”” These verses belong to

⁷⁸ Also spelt as Agastya

Yuddha Kanda (Book 6) Canto 107, in the Ramayana as composed by Valmiki.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

AGASTHYA: Sage and author of several Vedic hymns; also the star Canopus. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

BIRTH

Agasthya is called "pot born," ... he and Vashishta were both children of *Mithra-Varuna* and were both born from the same pot! (*SSS Vol.4 p.28*)

How he came to be known as Agasthya:

He put an end to the evil deeds of the ferocious giants, Ilvala and Vaathaapi, by just three words, "*Vaathaapi jeerno bhava.*" He made the high- peaked Vindhya bow his head and become low; that is why he is known by the name, Agasthya! He taught humility to the proudest in the land.

Agasthya is also reported to have drunk off the ocean all in one sip. That is to say, he dried up the ocean of *samsara*, with its waves of grief and joy, prosperity and adversity, success and failure. It is not any *siddhi*, this feat; it is a parable explaining that though he was a *grihastha* (a married man) with a son who recited the *Vedas* as soon as he saw light, he had conquered all attachments of the world. Be attached only to the ideal---that is the sign of the sage. (*SSS Vol.4 p.28*)

Agasthya curses Thataki:

Suketa who was a *yaksha*, who was praying to the Lord because he had no children. As a result of this, he was blessed with a very strong daughter by name Thataki, the *rakshasi*. This Thataki married a person by name Sangalu, and after the marriage she had two sons by name Subahu and Maricha. After some years, the husband died. Unable to bear the death of her husband, Sangalu, she became very much excited; and in great passion she developed anger; and with the help of her two sons, she has been all the time giving pain and trouble to the *rishis*. Realising this anger and bad conduct on the part of this woman, Agasthya⁷⁹ cursed her and said that she will thereafter conduct herself as a *rakshasi*. (*SSB 1977 p.147*)

IN EXILE

Rama in Dandakaranya:

Trouble surfaced as soon as they started living in the Dandakaranya forest. One day, a demon by name Viradha abducted Sita and refused to hand her over to Rama. He warned Rama and Lakshmana of dire consequences if they tried to retrieve Sita from him; but unmindful, Rama and Lakshmana attacked Viradha. The enraged Viradha then grasped Rama and Lakshmana one in each hand and started running.

Seeing this, Sita bewailed her misfortune and appealed to the demon to take her away also. Rama and Lakshmana then cut off

⁷⁹ See Chapter, Thataki – **Thataki's birth – marriage and Agasthya curse:**

both the hands of Viradha, wanting to kill him; but Viradha did not die. Viradha said to Rama, “You cannot kill me as I am protected by a boon. You must dig a pit and bury me there.” Viradha then added, “Not far away from here is a hermitage, where Sage Sharabhanga is waiting for You day and night.” Rama, accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, then made His way to Sharabhanga.

When Sharabhanga saw Rama he became ecstatic. He said, “O Rama! Today I have found fulfilment and I need not live any 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 little.” After uttering these words in the presence of Rama, he made a pyre and plunged into the burning flames, saluting Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita for the last time. From the burning flames arose Thumburu, the celestial musician, who had lived his life as Sharabhanga due to a curse. Thumburu advised Rama and Lakshmana to go to the ashram of sage Agasthya so that they could get help from the venerable sage. The brothers along with Sita then went to the hermitage of sage Agasthya (*SSB 1996 p.43-44*)

Lovely hermitage of Agasthya:

Meanwhile, a sage Sutheekshna by name came forward and prostrated before Rama. He was the pupil of the renowned Agasthya. (*RKRV Part II p.9*)

With him as companion, Rama moved forward towards the ashram of Agasthya, with Sita and Lakshmana following him.

They heard the murmur of a river flowing by. When they walked towards the sound and neared the river, they could see a mountain peak beside the flowing water. In the middle there were beautiful flower gardens; and like a lotus shining in the centre of a tank, there could be seen the lovely hermitage of Agasthya on a carpet of fragrant flowers.

Word cannot adequately describe the exquisite nature of that scene. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana stood petrified for a few moments at the captivating splendour. The atmosphere was so astoundingly spiritual. There, animals that are enemies of each other by their very nature, aquatic animals and land animals, beasts and birds of every type, sported and lived together, free from fear or enmity. They could see many monks and ascetics lost in meditation sitting on the river bank.

When they neared the ashram, Sutheekshna ran forward to convey the tidings to his Master. He fell at his feet and declared, “Oh Teacher Great! Oh Embodiment of Mercy! The prince of Ayodhya, the very Sustainer of this Universe, has just come into our Ashram with Sita and Lakshmana. The very person whom you were seeking to know and visualise through your spiritual practices for years, without regard to whether it is day or night, he has come to you, near you. Ah! What a great good day is this! What great good fortune!” Sutheekshna forgot himself and was filled with immeasurable ecstasy. (*RKR V part II p.12*)

Agasthya serves Rama and his companions with devotion and ecstasy:

At this, Agasthya rose suddenly from his seat and walked fast into the open. He saw the three, coming towards him. Tears flowed freely from his eyes. He ran forward, shouting, “Lord! Lord!” He clasped Rama to his bosom. He had no mind to release Rama from the embrace. He stood with his arms around Rama, clinging to him, as a creeper clings to the trunk of a tree. Agasthya could not contain the joy that welled up within him when he led Rama, Sita and Lakshmana into his hermitage. He invited them to rest on elevated seats. He had fruits and sweet tubers brought and he offered them for their repast. Then, he enquired about the journey they had gone through. When Rama was answering his queries, Agasthya listened with eyes closed in deep delight, tears of joy streaming down the cheeks. There was a happy smile hovering on his face. At last, he spoke, “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. He gave expression to his joy in grateful and devotional words.

Rama cites the reasons for his coming to the forest:

Rama said, “Oh Monarch among Monks! I have nothing to hide from you. You know too well the reason why I have come into the forest. Direct me, how I can destroy the brood of demoniac persons, the Rakshasas, who obstruct the austerities of sages and monks, and how I can protect and preserve from danger the dedicated servants of God. I shall act accordingly. I am awaiting

your advice. In the cold *Hemantha*⁸⁰ season lotuses shrivel up and die. The season has approached for the shrivelling of the Rakshasas.”

Agasthya expounds on Maya⁸¹:

Hearing these words of Rama, Agasthya smiled. He replied, “Lord! You are omniscient. I do not know why you require me to tell you how. I am unable to decide whether you are blessing me or testing me. Nevertheless, through the effect of your Grace, the *Darsan* (sight), *Sparshan* (contact) and *Sambhaashan* (speech) that you have just now blessed me with, I am able to grasp the significance of your question. That too is your grace. *Maya* which is your creation and your puppet, your slave, lying at your feet, is watching ever, for the slightest raising of your brow, to carry out your commands. Through the skill endowed by you, Maya is creating all beings on earth and in heaven.

“Your Maya is unconquerable. It is harassing beings endlessly, that is to say, those who fall a prey to its machinations. That is a fact that is known to all. Your Maya is like the ficus, spreading far and wide. The orbs in the Cosmos are as the fruits of that tree. The beings and things that exist in this Cosmos are like the worms and larvae that creep inside the fruit. The fruit might appear lovely outside; but when it is opened, hundreds of worms can be seen wriggling inside.

⁸⁰ Hemantha: Winter (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

⁸¹ See *Endnote – No.5 - Maya*

“Those attached to this exterior world and its transitory treasures are afraid of you, since in your aspect as Time, you cause inexorable ruin of their plans. The Cosmos itself is an appearance on your Reality. Rama! You are adored by all the worlds. You ask me for directions, just as a common man would. You praise me as men do. This raises a laugh in me. I am not concerned with anything now. I desire that you stay in this hermitage, with Sita and Lakshmana. That is the only boon I ask for. I prefer always to worship your Attributeful Form, not your Attributeless Principle. That is what I believe in and teach. That is my Ideal, my favourite Goal, my Aspiration.

“Therefore, grant me this boon. It is your sport, to elevate your servants, and yourself to slide into the background as if you are innocent of anything and ignorant of everything! But do not elevate me. Do not ask me for directions. My duty is to assent and accept your wishes and to follow your footsteps. Father! Do not inveigle me into your Maya, and delude me into egoism, making me the target of your sport.” (*RKR V Part II p.14-15*)

Rama asks Agasthya a suitable place to stay:

At this Rama said, “Oh Venerable Sage! This region is well known to you. So, what harm is there if you tell me which place I can select for my stay? This is what everybody would expect of you, isn’t it?”

Agasthya directs them to Panchavati - The story of Dandakaranya:

Agasthya replied, “Master! Since you have commanded me I shall obey implicitly and give answer⁸². Very near this place, the sacred river Godavari is flowing. Since ages, that great river has been flowing full and free. Adjacent to it, we have the Dandakaranya. (*RKRV Part II p.15*) There is a place called “Panchavati⁸³” in Dandaka Forest which a suitable place⁸⁴ to stay during your exile. (*SSB 2002 p.95*)

⁸² It is not as if Agasthya did not know that Ramachandra 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. (*SSB 1997 p.13-14*)

⁸³ sixteen miles from his ashram. He suggested that Rama can have his hut at that beautiful place and live there (*SSB 1977 p.14*)

⁸⁴ Agastya added that fruits and roots were available in abundance in Panchavati and the temperate climate was most conducive for living there. The Sage deliberately directed them to Panchavati so that the abduction of Sita, which was so important for the killing of demons, could occur there. He did not keep Rama and Lakshmana in his own hermitage since abduction of Sita would then be an impossibility. (*SSB 1996 p.44*)

When you sanctify it by residing in it you would have conferred upon the monks and sages that live therein all content and happiness. For, that forest region and its guardian ruler are under a curse and afflicted thereby.”

At this, Rama intercepted the sage with the words. “Master! Sita is anxious to learn the story of that curse. Tell us about it in detail.” Agasthya saw through that request and so he addressed Rama as “Oh, Director of the Eternal Play. Once upon a time famine raised its head in Panchavati area. All the monks and ascetics who lived there took refuge in the hermitage of Sage Gautama. He gave them all they needed through the powers he had acquired as a result of his austerities! When the famine was over, the monks decided to return to their old dwellings”.

“But there were some pseudo-monks among them, who conspired against him, and planned to bring him to disrepute. They brought a cow that was in the throes of death and made it enter the hermitage garden, on a particular green and attractive patch. Gautama saw it was about to bite a beautiful flower away from its stem. He attempted to drive it away. But at his very first push, the cow breathed its last! The conspirator monks immediately laid on him the dreaded sin of “*go-hathya*” (bovicide)! They condemned him as an outcast and a heathen. Gautama desired to discover whether the cow died as a result of his push or because its allotted span had ended. He sat in deep meditation exploring an answer to this vital question. Soon it was revealed to him that it was but a trick played by inimical monks. He was disgusted at their despicable nature. He said, ‘May this forest polluted by such low-minded persons be out of bounds for

the good and the saintly. May it become the haunt of demonic *yakshas*.’

“Another incident too added to the effects of this curse. The ruler of this region, Danda by name, violated the chastity of the daughter of his own preceptor, Bhrgu. Bhrgu listened to the pathetic story as related by his daughter; and in the extremity of his anger, he overwhelmed the region with a downpour of dust. Therefore, this area was sodden deep with mud, and in course of time, it was a thick jungle from end to end. The region is named Dandakaranya, after that infamous ruler. Rama! Crest-jewel of the Raghu Dynasty! I am certain that when you take residence in that forest, the Rakshasas will be decimated and the curse will be lifted. Monks and *Sadhakas* can once again dwell there and progress in their austerities. Humanity everywhere will benefit by this cleansing and this consummation. I may tell you that the sage who said the curse will also be rendered happy by you, for he is sad at the consequence of his anger.”

When Agasthya finished his account of the story of Dandakaranya, Rama said, “Well. So be it. I shall reside there.” He took leave of the Sage Agasthya, and proceeded to the Dandaka forest, with Sita and Lakshmana. (*RKRV Part II p.18*)

Agasthya hands over weapons:

Before they left his hermitage, Agasthya brought forth certain weapons that he had acquired by asceticism from Divine Sources, and placed them in the hands of Rama saying that he had no wish to use them. They had now a wielder who deserved them and who could utilise them for a holy purpose. “Rama,” he

said, “You are my shield, my strength, my prowess. These weapons cannot save me, but You can. Your Grace is the most powerful weapon I possess. You are my refuge, my fortress, the impenetrable armour for my breast.” (*RKRV Part II p.17-18*)

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 1997 p.14*)

As per the advice of Sage Agasthya, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana built a small *Parnasala* (cottage) on the banks of the river at Panchavati in the Dandakaranya forest and started living there happily. (*SSS Vol.39 p. 236*)

Spend money you earn usefully and wisely

There is a story connected with the construction of the great temple at Kalahasthi. It was built according to tradition by sage Agasthya, helped by Bhrigu and Bharadwaja. Every day when the Sun was about to set, Agasthya called every worker before him as he sat on the river bed and under his instruction, the two sages poured into the lap of each worker, sand taken from the bed; that was his wages! Now, that sand changed into gold in strict proportion to the work that the receiver had put in that day. If one did more work, he got more gold; if less, less. If one had wasted the entire day, it would remain sand, so far as that worker was concerned. There was no injustice, no grumbling, and no

favouritism. All worked in the presence of the All-seeing and so, all accepted the gold that was vouchsafed by the Almighty, for it was just his due, no more, no less. It is work that is done in this spirit, the spirit of the constant presence of the Lord that is honest; the Lord will reward by His Grace the work that is done sincerely and gladly, not work that is done for fear of superior officers, or *maistries* (foremen). If your hearts are pure, your work too would be pure. (*SSS Vol.3 p.122-123*)

Aswamedha Yajna⁸⁵ and Rama welcomes the sages and seers:

They were all welcomed and accommodated with due regard to their spiritual eminence. Soon, Viswamitra arrived. Rama honoured him, and offered reverential hospitality. Agasthya, the great sage, also reached Ayodhya. He was given proper reception and arrangements were made for his comfortable stay in the Capital. They saw the sanctified Hall where the Yaga was to be held and were delighted. When the citizens (*RKR Part II p.315-316*)

⁸⁵ See Chapter, *Lava And Kusha*

PANCHAKANYA

*Ahalya Draupadi Sita
Tara Mandodari tatha
Panchakanya smaranyam
mahapataka nashanam*

(Ahalya, Draupadi, Sita, Tara and Mandodari:
constantly remembering these five virgins
destroys great failings.)

The *Panchakanya*, five women from the epics of
India, *Ahalya*, *Tara*, *Sita* and *Mandodari* from
the *Ramayana* and *Draupadi* from the
Mahabharata, represent the five elements.

11.3 PANCHAKANYA - AHALYA



Figure 11: Ahalya

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Artist Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906)

Title English: Ahalya

Description English: Ahalya, wife of the sage Gautama, from Hindu Mythology..

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

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PANCHAKANYA AHALYA

In Hindu mythology, Ahalya⁸⁶, is the wife of the sage Gautama Maharishi. Many Hindu scriptures say that she was seduced by Indra (the king of the gods), cursed by her husband for infidelity, and liberated from the curse by Rama (an avatar of the god Vishnu).

Created by the god Brahma as the most beautiful woman, Ahalya was married to the much older Gautama. In the earliest full narrative, when Indra comes disguised as her husband, Ahalya sees through his disguise but nevertheless accepts his advances. Later sources often absolve her of all guilt, describing how she falls prey to Indra's trickery, or is raped. In all narratives, Ahalya and her lover (or rapist) Indra are cursed by Gautama. The curse varies from text to text, but almost all versions describe Rama as the eventual agent of her liberation and redemption. Although early texts describe how Ahalya must atone by undergoing severe penance while remaining invisible to

⁸⁶ Also known as Ahilya

the world and how she is purified by offering Rama hospitality, in the popular retelling developed over time, Ahalya is cursed to become a stone and regains her human form after she is brushed by Rama's foot.

Ahalya's seduction by Indra and its repercussions forms the central narrative of her story in all scriptural sources for her life. Medieval story-tellers often focus on Ahalya's deliverance by Rama, which is seen as proof of the saving grace of God. Her story has been retold numerous times in the scriptures and lives on in modern-age poetry and short stories, as well as in dance and drama. While ancient narratives are Rama-centric, contemporary ones focus on Ahalya, telling the story from her perspective. Other traditions deal with her children.

In traditional Hinduism, Ahalya is extolled as the first of the panchakanya ("five virgins"), archetypes of female chastity whose names are believed to dispel sin when recited. While some praise her loyalty to her husband and her undaunted acceptance of the curse and gender norms, others condemn her adultery.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

AHALYA⁸⁷: Princess of the *Puru* dynasty, who was turned into a stone by the curse of her husband, Gautama⁸⁸, for suspected

⁸⁷ Also spelt as Ahalyaa.

⁸⁸ Gautama (Gauthama): Great sage who brought the Godavari River to earth for the benefit of mankind. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

adultery. She regained her form when Rama touched the stone with his divine feet. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Hermitage of Gautama Maharshi

Viswamitra, Rama, Lakshmana and his disciplesreached an expensive park. It appeared as if it could have boasted of a number of hermitages inside it years ago, but now the dwellings had crumbled. One could see altars once maintained with loving attention, and spots where the sacred fire once lit and fed. Rama noted that it was a place sanctified by ascetics and sages and he drew the attention of Viswamitra to his surmise. Viswamitra smiled, and said, “Rama! How correctly you have observed! I am very glad, and I shall inform you why the great personage who resided in this place left it and went away. Listen!

Even Gods used to acclaim this Hermitage. This is the hermitage of Gautama Maharishi. For many years, he resided here with his wife, Ahalya. He gladly underwent the most severe austerities. He did many elaborate Yajnas. This park was resplendent with spiritual grandeur. It was bright and full of peace and joy. Every day was a holy day for the people here. (*RKRK Part I p 152-153*)

Story of Ahalya

Ahalya, the wife of the sage, was a woman of great virtue, and a perfect paragon of beauty. There was no one equal to her in personal beauty and charm. So, Gautama was keeping her ever under watch, and guarding her with vigilant care. One day, while Gautama was absent from the *Ashram* (hermitage), the chief of Gods came into hermitage in the guise of Gautama himself! The

virtuous spouse took Him to be her Lord. She served him reverentially, but the real Gautama entered and discovered her apparent faithlessness. He recognized Indra, in spite of his disguise, and became terribly enraged. ‘Evil-minded fellow’ he shouted; but Indra had suddenly disappeared.

Gautama curses her:

He turned towards Ahalya in his anger and roared, ‘you have vowed to destroy this hermitage by indulging in vice, is it? I shall not be here for a minute longer. I cannot tolerate the sight of your face. Be prostrate behind some bush, living as a sprite on air, with no food or drink. I am off.’ Gautama hated the place that had been desecrated by deceit.

The sage Gautama cursed his wife Ahalya for transgressing the limits imposed by the higher Self on the lower self⁸⁹. (*SSS Vol.16 p.111*)

Rama’s Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhaashan cleanses

Ahalya wept her heart out, and pleaded that she was innocent of sin, that she was deceived by the disguise and activated by reverence towards her lord only, that she was carried away by duty of loyalty to her husband. She held his feet and prayed for pardon. Gautama melted a little at her importunities. The truth became clear to him. But since words once spoken could not be

⁸⁹ Man or woman, each one has to honour the glory of mankind and examine each thought, word and deed on the touchstone of Dharma (righteousness). Or else, one has to encounter a curse. (*SSS Vol.16 p.111*)



Figure 12: Liberation of Ahalya

Source of the Photo:

Description **English:** Cover page of Ahalyoddhara

Date 1 April 2011

Source • [Ramabhadracharya_Works - Ahalyoddhara \(2006\).jpg](#)

Author • [Ramabhadracharya_Works - Ahalyoddhara \(2006\).jpg](#); Shri
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withdrawn, he said, ‘Ahalya! You know that I have vowed never to go against spoken word. Therefore, you have to lie in bush and briar, sad and starving, until Rama, son of Dasaratha, comes this way and seeing you, He will shower Grace on you, allowing you to touch His Feet, and He will speak with you in great compassion. The Darshan, Sparshan (Touching the Holy Feet) and Sambhaashana, (conversation) will cleanse you and you will shine forth in your real form and charm. I shall then join you. So saying, Gautama left this place and hastened to the Himalayan region. From that moment, Ahalya lost her name and form. She lives on air and is deeply in austerity, eager to join her lord. And this once lovely park suffered neglect. (*RKRV Part I p 153-154*)

Rama expressed surprise and wanted to know where she was
When Viswamitra narrated this tale (Rama, the incarnation of Lord Narayana, knew everything, but pretended as though He did not know anything⁹⁰), Ramachandra expressed surprise. What! You are telling me that she was waiting for me! Poor thing! If you can make know where she is, deep austerity, tell me where.” As Rama moved on, Viswamitra and Lakshmana followed him at some distance. He passed through some tangled bushes and entered a hut, behind a bush of briar⁹¹.

As (Rama) moved toward Ahalya, the vibrations that emanated from His feet brought a new surge of life into her petrified form⁹². Ahalya was until that moment immersed in austerity. She was far away from the eyes of Gods, demons and men; she had

⁹⁰ *SSB 1996 p.26*

⁹¹ *RKRV Part I p.154*

⁹² *SSB 1996 p.26*

forgotten her Name and lost her Form. She had no concern with food and sleep. She merely existed as a piece of rock! She appeared like an orb of the Moon, well hidden by clouds, or the artificial fire covered by thick curtains of smoke. As Rama neared her, his foot touched Ahalya. (*RKRV Part I p.154*) She immediately clung to the feet of Rama, and prayed to Him to forgive her and shower grace on her⁹³.

Ahalya raised her head and seeing the divinely charming Form of Rama, she held the Feet, exclaiming in ecstasy. “Ah! I am saved. Oh God come to me to save me from sin! Your heart is moved at last.” She poured out her gratitude in many hymns of praise. She rose like the moon from behind the clouds, effulgent and fresh. At that moment Gautama too who was a master of the mysteries of yoga, appeared before them for he knew that Rama has come and rescued his wife. He accepted her, purified by rigorous austerity, and blessed by Rama. Both husband and wife fell at the Feet of Rama and Lakshmana; who were both overwhelmed by ananda they had. Gautama offered reverence and homage to Viswamitra. The bond of disciples was amazed at the wonder they witnessed. They looked at the brothers with the fixed gaze of wonder. Viswamitra took leave of Gautama, and walked on, in the north easterly direction, with Rama and Lakshmana by his side. (*RKRV Part I p.155*)

⁹³ *ibid*

Viswamitra narrates at Mithila, the purification and liberation of Ahalya; Sathananda's gratitude:

Viswamitra resumed his narrative with the start of the journey towards Mithila. The stories related by the sage to the brothers were also explained to Janaka. When the story of the purification and liberation of Ahalya, the Consort of Sage Gautama at the hermitage which was near the Capital City, was related, Sathananda (*chief priest of King Janaka and Gautama's eldest son*) was surprised beyond measure. He ejaculated, "What! Has my mother been freed from the curse? Did these Divine personalities render my mother holy, and restore her to my father? Ah! Without doubt, they are Divine." While streams of tears of gratitude and joy fell down his cheeks, he became so overcome with emotion that he was unable to move, like a pillar. Viswamitra observed him and said, "Son! Do not be so overwhelmed with the little events that have happened so far! In the coming days, many events vastly more amazing will happen. They will cause amazement and ecstasy, by their superhuman glory. Your parents too will arrive at Mithila City tomorrow or the day after. You can hear the marvellous glory of Rama and Lakshmana direct from them. Calm yourself. (*RKRV Part I p.162/163*)

BHAGAVAN'S INTERPRETATION OF AHALYA'S CHARACTER:

Power of Rama's Name:

Ahalya was a lady who disobeyed her husband, Gautama. Gautama cursed Ahalya and she became a stone. When Rama puts His foot on the stone, she

comes back to her human form. She comes back to her original form as a woman. A woman cursed to become a stone, becomes a human form again, with Rama's Name.

Woman is not merely a gender. Woman represents sensitivity, tenderness, receptivity, softness and sweetness. What is a stone? A stone is rock, tough and harsh. Because of disobedience, you become rough, tough and hard, like a stone. By repeating God's Name, the stone can become a woman, meaning you can become sensitive, receptive, soft, smooth and tender.

Therefore, when Rama's Name is repeated, one becomes soft. The stony-hearted fellow, a fellow, who does not react to the misery of the other people, and who does not respond to the needs of other people, is worse than a stone. But when this stony-hearted fellow sings the glory of Rama, he becomes a tender-hearted person. He has a heart softer than butter, like that of a woman. (*Alarm Bells! Divine p.20-21*)

Good thoughts will get desires in good forms:

When you feel that it is not the 'other' whom you are serving---but, yourself then, your service will be better and more effective. Establish this attitude more and more firmly in your mind. If you do good, you get good from those around you and from the universal entity, God. If you do bad, you get bad. Divinity but resounds, reflects, reacts! God has no favourites, no prejudices.

The thought creates a desire; the desire creates a form through which it is expressed. Have good thoughts, you get desires in good forms. Ahalya was lying as a Stone, for many years, as a result of the curse of her husband. Inside the Stone, there persisted human thought, which was again turned into human form with the touch of Rama's feet. If Ahalya had become a Stone, with no trace of "Thought", she would not have emerged as a woman from it. So, unless all trace of "Thought" is destroyed, the form will sprout and grow and decline; that is to say, birth and death are inevitable. (*SSS Vol.7 p.335-336*)

Eagerness to awaken:

You may have a grand feast on the plate, but, unless you have hunger, you will not be tempted to eat. There are qualifications for every task, be it eating

or fasting, be it leading a householder's life or monk's life. Only a stone that was once Ahalya and was saturated by *dhyana* (meditation) and remorse can be transmuted into human form and only the feet of a Divine incarnation can so transmute it. All stones trodden by Rama did not get transformed into women; nor did any of the feet that trod upon that stone had the power of giving life. The *Guru* must have the awakening touch and the *shishya* (disciple) must have the eagerness to awake. The relationship should not be like the snake with a frog in the mouth, the frog too weak to escape, the snake too full to swallow. The *Guru* must be able to save; the *shishya* must be ready to be saved. (*SSS Vol.4 p.54*)

What is resurrection?

NOT all places where images are installed are sacred; or, if they are sacred, not all of them are equally potent. Rama incarnated as Man for the re-establishment of *Dharma*; centuries later, Gopana had the chance to worship Him on this hill and to talk and move with Him, as his Master and Lord. Badhragiri, by his *thapas*, forced Rama to install Himself on his head. Truly, this place is a monument for the uniqueness of *Bhakthi* as a means of realising the Lord. All stones are not Ahalyas; nor are all feet those of Rama. It is only when the stone that is Ahalya is trodden by the feet of Him who is Rama that the resurrection takes place⁹⁴. What is the resurrection, really? It is the revelation of the divinity inherent in man. That is the result of contact with God-head; that can come only after years of contrition, which serves to remove the evil from the heart of man. (*SSS Vol.3 p.205*)

Ahalya's curse:

Rama absolved Ahalya of the curse which had turned her into a stone. Ahalya might be deemed a woman of Rajasic temperament. (*SSS Vol.25 p.182*)

Ahalya, the wife of Sage Gautama was a great and noble lady, yet, she had to suffer on account of the curse of her husband. He cursed her on one occasion, "May you become a stone and lie in the dust!" It is only due to the grace of

⁹⁴ The Ahalya rock of steady *Tapas* had to earn the contact of the Divine Feet of Rama, to get Life, Love and Light. (*SSS Vol.18 p.166*)

Lord Rama at a later date that she could come out of the curse. The moment Rama's feet touched the stone, the stone transformed itself into Ahalya. God can turn even a stone into a human being and sanctify it. He can purify the impure. However much you suffer from evil thoughts, the moment you think of God, all your impurities will be removed. Mind is the root cause for everything. Hence, ladies and gentlemen, everyone should cultivate sacred and noble thoughts. You must purify your heart. Only then can humanness survive. Otherwise, it degenerates into demonic nature. (*SSS Vol.39 p.244-245*) Rama came across Ahalya, who had been transformed into a stone. He gave her life, absolved her of sin through penitence and restored her to her husband. (*SSS Vol.22 p.67*)

11.4 SAGE ATHRI

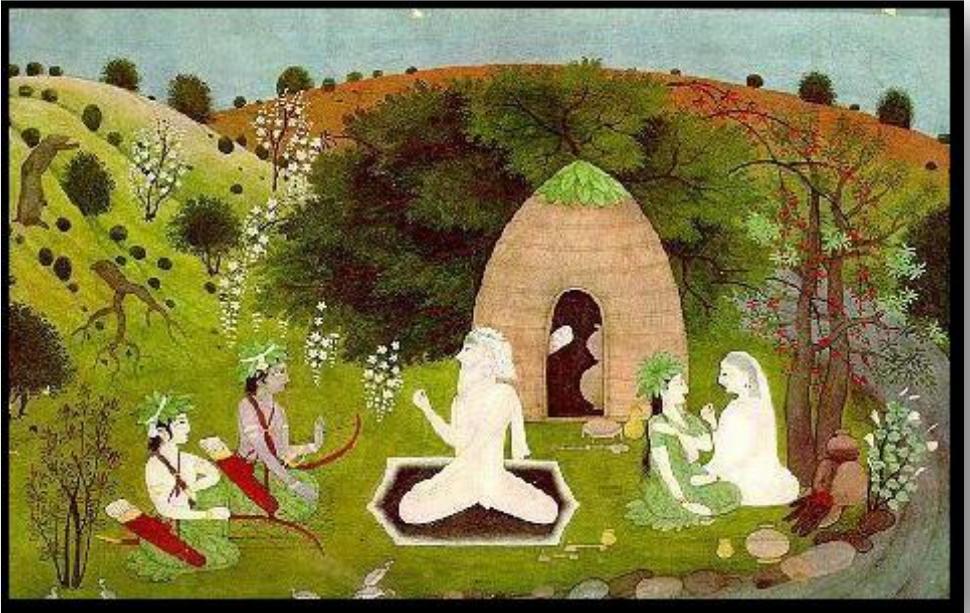


Figure 13: Hermitage of Sage Athri

Source of the Photo

Description **English:** "Rama, Sita and Lakshmana at the Hermitage of Sage Atri.
Pahari School, Chamba kalam, Kangra idiom"

Date 1780-1785.

Source http://www.goloka.com/docs/rama/rama_04.html

Author unknown

SAGE ATHRI

Sage Athri is among the Sapta Rishi (seven luminous or eternal sages in the sky) symbolized by the great bear and the seven stars around it. Named Megrez in Latin, the star is also considered as δ (Delta) or the 4th star in the Great Bear constellation

Once trinity decided to test the chastity of Anasuya. They came to Anasuya's house as Brahmins and request for food with the condition that she has to serve it nude. Anasuya without any hesitation agreed to that. In turn she used her pathivratha Shakti to convert the Brahmins into child and offered them food without any dress. Trinity could revert back to their original form only after she did herself on the request of gods. Trinity blessed them with three sons being sons: Dattatreya, Chandraatri and Krishnaatri or Durvasa.

Rama, the son of Dasaratha, visited Athri Maharishi's Ashram during his fourteen years of stay in the forest. It was Athri who showed the way to Dandakaranya forest to Rama, after showering his hospitality on him.

Athri Maharishi is considered to be one of the great discoverers of sacred Mantras of Hinduism. Attri-Samhita and Attri-smrithi are two works attributed to Athri.

Till the present day, a number of Brahmin families have this sage's name at the head of their lineage, which indicates that he or his descendants tutored that whole lineage.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

ATHRI⁹⁵: A sage; father of Dattatreya. Also, one of 10 mental sons of Hiranyagarbha. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Valmiki directs Rama to Chitrakoota:

Sage (*Valmiki*) spoke soft and sweet, with a smile beaming on his resplendent face. “Rama! I know in reality you reside in the hearts of your devotees. Now, I shall tell you the best place where this form of yours can stay. You can reside on the Chitrakoota Hill. It has all facilities for comfortable stay. It is a holy place and a charming beauty spot. The atmosphere is saturated with love and peace. Lions and elephants roam together there, with no trace of rivalry. The river Mandakini, extolled in the Vedas, flows round the hill. Sages like Athri live there in hermitages, which you can visit and render more sacred. Confer your blessing on that sublime spot and on that dear divine river.”
(*RKRV Part I p.373-374*)

⁹⁵ Also spelt as *Attri*

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana reach the hermitage of Athri

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana too left Chitrakoota and reached the hermitage of the great Sage, Athri. The sage came to know in advance of the intention of Rama to visit his retreat, through his pupils. So when Rama was approaching the Ashram, he moved far out on the forest track in order to welcome Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. Athri was so overpowered with joy at the sign of Grace, that he shed profuse tears in his ecstasy and declared that the visit had indeed made his life realise its highest aim. He said that his austerities had at last borne fruit that day. That evening, the Sage Athri gathered his pupils and placed a high seat for Rama at the head of the assembly. His consort Anasuya⁹⁶ had meanwhile attended to the needs of Sita and brought her too to that place. Then, 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. Anasuya also praised the virtues of Sita, and gave her holy counsel on the

⁹⁶ Anasuya: Wife of sage Athri and mother of Dattatreya; an incarnation of the Trinity. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Anasuya (free from envy and jealousy), also known as Anasuya, was the wife of an ancient Indian rishi (sage) named Athri, in Hindu mythology. In the Ramayana, she appears living with her husband in a small hermitage in the southern periphery of the forest of Chitrakoota. She was very pious, and always practiced austerities and devotion. This made her attain miraculous powers. When Sita and her husband Rama visited her during their exile, Anasuya was very attentive to them, and gave Sita an ointment which was to keep her beautiful for ever. She was mother of the Dattatreya (the sage-avatar of Divine Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), the irascible sage Durvasa and the moon-god Chandra. She was the daughter of Sage Kardama and his wife Devahuti. Sage Kapila was her brother and teacher. She is extolled as Sati Anasuya - Anasuya, the chaste wife. (*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*)

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 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 Sita revealed the truth of the Rama principle to Anasuya, the consort of the Sage Athri.

Asramites give a tearful farewell to Rama, Sita and Lakshmana:

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. The Asramites shed tears of sorrow when they parted company. Despite their determined attempts to accompany Rama during the subsequent stages of his forest life, they had to stop and resume the life for which they had dedicated their lives. They had to witness helplessly the departure of the Divine Master of their hearts. (*RKRV Part II p.2-4*)

11.5 BHARADWAJA MAHARSHI

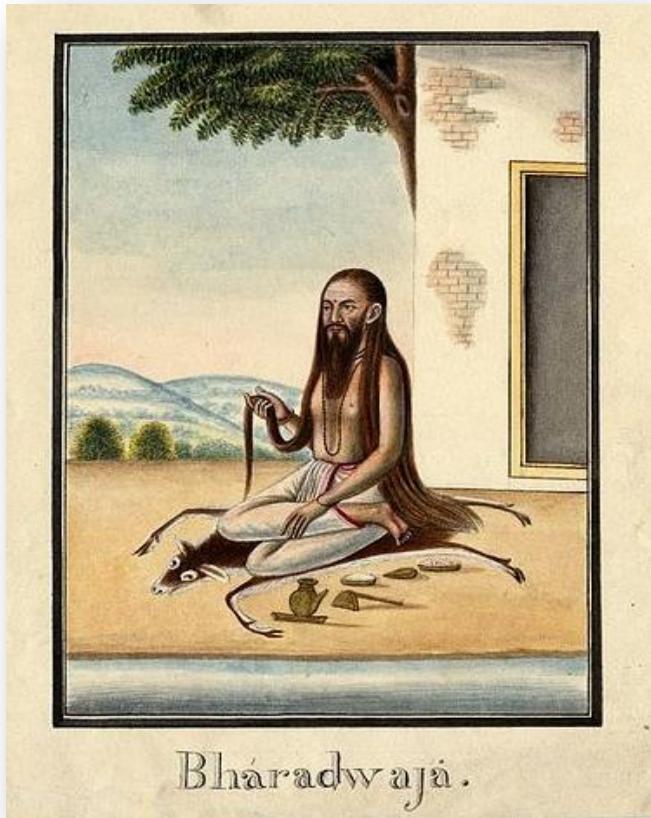


Figure 14: Maharshi Bharadwaja

Source of the Photo:

Description **English:** Watercolour painting on paper of Bharadwaja, a Rishi who Rāma, Sita and Laksmana spent time with during their exile. Bharadwaja is shown seated on the ground in front of a building. A tree is shown behind the building and hills and foliage are shown in the far distance. Bharadwaja is seated on an antelope skin and on the ground around him are implements needed during his meditations. He is seated with his right leg folded over his left and his hair is loose down to the ground. He wears a white dhoti and is bare-chested except for a string of beads around his neck. He rests his left hand on his lap and holds his hair with his right hand. He has a full beard and moustache. The painting is surrounded by a black border.

Date 19thC(early)

Source http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=182824&partid=1&searchText=bharadvaja&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numpages=10&images=on&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx¤tPage=1

Author Company School

BHARADWAJA MAHARSHI

Bharadwaja was one of the greatest Hindu Arya sages (Maharishis), descendant of rishi Angirasa, whose accomplishments are detailed in the Puranas. He was one of the Saptarishis (Seven Great Sages Rishi) in the present Manvantara; with others being Athri, Vashishta, Viswamitra, Gautama, Jamadagni, Kasyapa⁹⁷

Bharadwaja Rishi was father of Guru Dronacharya and grandfather of Ashwatthama. Bharadwaja Maharishi, a sage of the Vedic period, is renowned for his thirst for knowledge. He attained extraordinary scholarship and the power of meditation. Bharadwaja Maharishi, a sage of the Vedic period, and son of Brihaspati is renowned for his thirst for knowledge. He attained extraordinary scholarship and the power of meditation.[3] He is

⁹⁷ Kasyapa (Kashyapa): Father of all living creatures; son of Marichi and grandson of Brahma. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

also the author of Ayurveda. His Ashram still exists at the holy Prayag (Allahabad).

In Ramayana, Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana went on exile for the words of his father. Rama along with them went through many forest regions starting from crossing Yamuna river with help of Guha, head clansman and a friend of Rama's father Dasaratha. As he travelled he visited many rishis' ashrams, met many rishis and sages including Agasthya, Gautama and Bharadwaja. Rama and others rested in Bharadwaja's ashram and accepted his offerings as great sages knew that Rama as incarnation of Vishnu, Sita as goddess Lakshmi and Lakshmana as none other than Shesha.

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

BHARADWAJA: Celebrated sage who taught the science of medicine; seer of *Vedic* hymns. (**Glossary - *Dhyana Vahini* p.116**)

Bharadwaja and Vashishta also knew very well that Rama was an *Avatar*. (**SSB 1977 p.62**)

This Bharadwaja was a great sage, who studied the *Vedas* for full one hundred years; but, finding that the *Vedas* were *anantha* (endless) he did *thapas* for prolonging life, and from Indra he got two extensions of a century each. Even then, the *Vedas* could not

be completed, so, he asked Indra again for another hundred years. Indra showed him 3 huge mountain ranges and said, "What you have learned in 3 centuries from only 3 hand-full from out of the 3 ranges, which the *Vedas* are. So, give up the attempt to exhaust the *Vedas*. Do a *Yaga* (ritual sacrifice), instead, which I shall teach you: that will give you the fruit of *Vedic* study, full and complete."

Father of Ayurveda:

In ancient times, there was a highly skilled master of medicine and surgery, the sage Bharadwaja. He taught surgery to the world. He was the author of the science of Ayurveda⁹⁸--the Science of Life. (*SSS Vol.24 p.83-84*)

Probing further and further into the scientific attainments of the sages of ancient India, the construction of *Vimanas*, vehicles capable of flying in space, is described by Sage Bharadwaja. Mental Science had advanced so much that they could reproduce what had happened or predict what would happen. The Science of Medicine was highly developed in India. It was Sage Bharadwaja who taught this science for the benefit of mankind. Sage Atreya⁹⁹ took up the task of propagating this science and technique of healing¹⁰⁰. (*Sathya Sai Vahini p.185*)

⁹⁸ People consider that *Ayurvedic* medicines do not yield quick results. People today have a craze for quick results. Quickness may operate both ways. Today antibiotics are used. A few drops of the medicine brings down the fever. But later fever goes up. There are also adverse reactions. (*SSS Vol.24 p.84*)

⁹⁹ Atreya (Athreya). Relating to the great sage Athri, or Atreya. Classical Indian medical knowledge is called ayur-veda (science of health and long life), the two chief traditions being those of Atreya and

Studied the Vedas:

Bharadwaja studied the *Vedas* for three successive lives. When born a fourth time, he started reading again! So Indra came to him and taught him the supreme knowledge of Brahman (*Brahma-vidya*) and confided to him the secret of liberation. Then Bharadwaja put an end to his reading and study and entered upon hard, concentrated meditation. He realised the *Atma*. (*Dhyana Vahini p.62*)

HIS FAMILY:

Sukesa, (*was*) the son of Bharadwaja (*Upanishad Vahini p.45*)

Vishnu killed the wife of sage Bharadwaja, since she indulged in violence.” (*SSB 1996 p.24*)

The sage Bharadwaja, to whose *gotra* Jamadagni¹⁰¹ belonged, appeared before Parasurama¹⁰² and restored Jamadagni to life by placing the head and body together. (*SSS Vol.19 p.136*)

Dhanvantari. Later presented by Charaka in the Charaka Samhitha (text stressing diagnosis and prognosis).

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter, *Introduction of Notable Seers and Sages in Ramayana: an Introduction*

¹⁰¹ Jamadagni : Hrishika's hermit son and Parasurama's father. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

¹⁰² See Chapter, *Parasurama - How Kerala acquired the name Parasurama Kshetra*

The *Yaga* performed by sage Bharadwaja

Bharadwaja decided on performing the *Yaga*; Indra taught him how to do it; all preparations were completed. The sage wanted that Sakthi must preside and bless the *Yaga*. So he went to Kailasa but, the time was not opportune for presenting his petition. Shiva and Sakthi were engaged in a competitive dance, trying to find out who could dance longer. Eight days passed thus, before Sakthi noticed Bharadwaja standing in the cold. She just cast a smile at him and danced along as before! The sage mistook the smile as a cynical refusal to notice him; so he turned his back on Kailasa and started to descend. To his dismay, he found his left leg, hand and eye put out of action by a stroke. Shiva saw him fall; He came up to him and consoled him; Bharadwaja was told that Sakthi had indeed blessed him and his *Yaga*. Then, Shiva revived him and cured him, sprinkling water from the *Kamandalu*. Both Shiva and Sakthi granted the *Rishi* (sage) boons: They would both attend the *Yaga*, they said.

All past assurances accomplished by one incident

After the *Yaga* was over, they were so pleased that they conferred even more boons on the sage. Shiva said that they would take human form and be born in the Bharadwaja *Gothra* (lineage) thrice: Shiva alone as Shirdi Sai Baba, Shiva and Shakti together at Puttaparthi as Sathya Sai Baba and Sakthi alone as Prema Sai, later. Then Shiva remembered the illness that had suddenly come upon Bharadwaja at Kailasa on the eighth day of the waiting in the cold on the ice. He gave another assurance. "As expiation for the neglect which Shakti showed you at Kailasa for 8 days, this Sakthi will suffer the stroke for 8 days, when We both take birth as Sathya Sai and, on the 8th day, I

shall relieve her from all signs of the disease by sprinkling water, just as I did at Kailasa to cure your illness." (*SSS Vol.3 p.22*)

IN THE TRETA - THE AGE OF RAMAYANA:

Rama in Bharadwaja's Hermitage:

Rama entered the hermitage of Bharadwaja taking Sita with him and accompanied by Lakshmana and Guha. The sage appeared at the doorway and walked forward to welcome him, as if he was waiting since long to be blessed by the Darsan. Seeing him, Rama prostrated before him, and when Bharadwaja lovingly embraced him and invited him to enter the hermitage, he was very happy to comply. The sage made them sit on the seats he had spread on the floor, for each according to his status.

He enquired after the welfare of every one of them and declared that his heart's desire was fulfilled that day. He asked his pupils to bring fruits and roots, and placing them before his guests, he pleaded that they might partake of them. They spent the night in that hermitage, accepting the sage's hospitality and service. (*RKRV Part I p.363*)

When day dawned, Rama proceeded to the confluence of the three rivers at Prayag, and requested the sage too to give him company. Bharadwaja said, "Listen, Oh Lord! I chose this holy spot for my hermitage and austerities, since I knew I could get here the darsan for which I longed for many years. To get the thrill of your Darsan, I undertook vows and 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 darsan 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.”

Seeing him filled with ecstasy, with tears flowing, Guha¹⁰³ was overwhelmed with surprise. He said to himself, “Oh! What great good fortune is mine!” He was overcome by supreme joy. Meanwhile Rama suppressed His Divinity and acted as if he was just a man with common human attributes. While Sage Bharadwaja was dilating delightedly on the Rama Principle, Rama listened, as if it all related to another person called Rama and not to himself! He replied, “Oh! Foremost among sages! All those who are recipients of your hospitality are, for that very reason, adorable. All such are full of virtue and wisdom.” The pupils, ascetics, sages and monks of the hermitage who heard the words of Bharadwaja and those of Rama were struck with wonder and filled with joy. *RKR V Part I p.364*)

Rama along with Sita, Lakshmana and Guha leave the Hermitage:

After the holy bath at Prayag, Rama left the hermitage with Sita, Lakshmana and Guha, and entered the deeper recesses of the forest. Bharadwaja followed them as far as the river bank, and there he clasped Rama in loving embrace, wishing for them a

¹⁰³ See Chapter, *Guha*

happy journey. Rama prayed for the blessings of the Sage and said, “Master! Tell us which direction is best.” The sage replied, with a laugh: “Lord! There is no path unknown to you in all the worlds, is there?”

You are playing the role of a mere man, in this habitment. Well, since I have been asked, it is my duty to reply to the best of my knowledge.” Thus saying, he beckoned to four of his pupils, and sent them with Rama to show him the track that led to the next hermitage complex. Those boys were delighted at the chance they secured to journey with Rama for some little distance. They felt that it was a gift earned in previous lives. They walked in front showing them the track. Behind them, Rama went with Sita, Lakshmana and Guha. They went as far as the bank of the Yamuna river, and there, they took leave of Rama and turned back, without the least will to do so. (*RKRV Part I p.365*)

Bharatha in Prayag:

Prayag is known as Triveni, for the river Saraswati too enters the twin rivers at that holy place. Its sacredness is tripled thereby. They bathed at the famous confluence with due rites. The anchorites, hermits, celibates, sages, and monks of Prayag were delighted at the chance to fill their eyes with the sight of Bharatha. They told among themselves, “Oh! he casts around him the same halo as Rama. In fact, the appearance is just the same.” Everyone who looked at him could scarce indulge in a wink, lest the delight would be interrupted thereby! (*RKRV Part I p.429-430*)

Bharatha comes to the Ashram of Bharadwaja:

The inmates of the Bharadwaja Ashram in Prayag learnt of the coming of the brothers with contingents of his armed forces, accompanied by their mothers and ministers. Sage Bharadwaja sent his disciples to Bharatha and invited the party to visit the Ashram. Interpreting the invitation as a command, Bharatha and his entourage entered the Ashram. The brothers prostrated before that Monarch of the Monastic Orders. Bharadwaja raised them by the shoulders and drew them near with great affection. He gave them refreshingly cool drinks. He noticed that Bharatha was sitting with his head bent in shame and fear, lest his share in the exile of Rama be revealed through questions that might be asked. Bharadwaja discovered the reason for his silence and nervousness. He said, “Bharatha! You need have no apprehensions. I am aware of all that happened. No one can control or direct the path of Destiny. Why pine over the boons that your mother demanded? No trace of wrong can be attributed to her for this. The Will of God induced her to ask such boons. Kaikeyi, I know, loves Rama as her very breath. So, the reason for the turn her mind took is to be sought, not in any human field of thought and reason, but only in the Divine plan. As the world judges events, Kaikeyi has done wrong. As the Vedas lay down, the Goddess Saraswati who presides over the tongue has done wrong. Know that what has happened is in conformity with the Will of the Almighty. (*RKRV Part I p.430-431*)

“Bharatha! The world will enthuse over your spotless renown, and sing your praise. Vedas will be valued more on account of such as you, exemplifying their teachings and demonstrating their efficacy. Do not hesitate! The son to whom the father

entrusts the kingdom is thereby deemed deserving of the right to govern it. That relentless adherent of Truth, that High-souled ruler, Emperor Dasaratha, gave the Empire to you, and ordered that you should act according to the Dharma of Monarchs. (*RKRV Part I p.431*)

“The exile of Rama into the forest has resulted in a series of calamities. The entire world is sunk in sorrow on account of this event. Now your mother is repenting pitiably over the wrong. You are innocent and blameless. No blemish can attach itself to you now if you rule over the Empire. In fact, Rama will be happy to know that you have taken up the reins of imperium. (*RKRV Part I p.431*)

“I must also say that the mission on which you are now set is very laudable indeed. Your purpose is highly commendable. For, devotion to the Lotus Feet of Rama is the spring and source of all prosperity and progress. Bharatha! I can boldly declare that there is none so virtuous, so fortunate as you. You have proved yourself worthy of being the dearly beloved younger brother of Rama. Rama sanctified this, our Ashram, while on his way to the forest. That night, till the hour of midnight, Rama was talking to me mostly of you and your virtues. They proceeded with me to Prayag for the holy bath. They remembered you even while engaged in bathing! He felt very sad that he could not see you and Satrugna the day he left Ayodhya. I cannot measure the love that Rama has towards you. (*RKRV Part I p.431-432*)

“Besides, Rama is ever intent on assuaging the grief of those who take refuge in him. The entire world is his family. All are

his kith and kin. I believe you are the ‘affection’ of Rama, in human form, no less. What you feel as a blemish on your name is, to me a lesson, an example, and an inspiration. Bharatha! You should not be weighed down by sadness. You are in possession of the Wish-fulfilling Gem! Why then should you lament that you are poor? It isn’t proper that you should do so. The Darsan of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana is verily the treasure all spiritual aspirants seek. I secured that fortune; for, I feasted my eyes on that Darsan. I could speak with them. I was in their Presence and I could touch them too. I had the privilege and pleasure of being their host. Perhaps, there was some balance of fortune still awaiting me. For, I have now this pleasure of getting your Darsan too. Ecstasy has now filled my heart. I am truly blessed. Rama has exiled himself into the forest for our sake, ascetics living therein, so that our yearnings might be fulfilled and our holiness heightened. We are blessed indeed.” (*RKRV Part I p.432-433*)

In this manner, Bharadwaja, the great Sage, praised Bharatha for his manifold virtues and excellences. While speaking in this strain, tears of joy rolled down the cheeks of the revered ascetic. Bharatha and Satrugna had their minds set on Rama and his limitless Prema. They felt that they were indeed fortunate to be his brothers, but the joy was immediately extinguished at the thought that they had been themselves exiled from the presence of that Embodiment of love. So, they were plunged in gloom, in unbearable agony and inexpressible grief. In a voice choked by anguish, Bharatha said, rising up from the prostration he offered to the Sage, “Master! You are aware of the Past, Present and the Future. You have spoken the very Truth. You are master of the

Highest Truth. Rama is unbeatable in skill and power. I have resolved to utter in your Presence only the Truth. Rama knows the workings of the people's mind and what is now agitating them. I have at present no grief over the wrong committed by my mother. I have no fear that the people would blame me for the tragedy that has befallen them. I have no despair even when it is announced that I am ineligible for heaven. (*RKRV Part I p.433*)

“My father has earned high renown. Though dead, his fame has spread over the entire world. When his beloved son, Rama departed from his presence with Lakshmana, he gave up the bubble breath that very instant. He could not survive the bolt of that tragedy. There is no need, therefore, to be anxious any more about him. But Sita, Rama and Lakshmana are moving about barefooted. Donning the robes of ascetics, they sit on mats of kusa grass. They reside in leaf-thatched huts. They are fried by the sun, soaked by rain. They shiver in the cold and bear its pangs. They are undergoing untold hardships in the forest, aren't they? Now, tell me, am I not the sole cause for all these hardships? It is this sad fact that is eating me throughout all the hours of the day and night. Food refuses to enter my stomach. Sleep refuses to close the lids of my eyes. This crookedness of my mother's mind has become a dagger sticking in my heart. The stratagem she devised for my installation on the throne has turned into a trap to ruin me. The agony that is gnawing me from within cannot be appeased, whatever is done. Nothing can cure it. It will end only on the day when Rama returns to Ayodhya. No other remedy exists to destroy this agony.” (*RKRV Part I p.433-434*)

The monks who had gathered were delighted to hear these words from the Prince. Bharadwaja told him, “Son! Do not grieve any more. The moment your eyes fall on the Lotus Feet of Rama the burden of grief which torments you now is certain to disintegrate and disappear.” The ascetics too consoled and comforted him in various ways. Meanwhile, the Great Sage Bharadwaja beckoned a pupil and directed him to bring roots, tubers and fruits to be placed before Bharatha and Satrughna. He also ordered his pupil to arrange for the supply of food to the aides, the ministers and courtiers, and the citizens of Ayodhya, all of whom had borne uncomplainingly many a hardship on the way in their eagerness to have the Darsan of Rama, and who were afflicted in mind by the agony of separation from their beloved Lord. (*RKRV Part I p.434-435*)

Complying with that order most reverentially, the pupil quickly offered plentiful repast to everyone who had come as guests. For the Princes, Bharatha and Satrughna, their Families, the Ministers and Courtiers, the Pundits and the Brahmins, hospitality was arranged on an elaborate festive scale. Everything was produced plentifully and perfectly, through the ascetic’s mysterious willpower itself. Bharatha was filled with wonder. (*RKRV Part I p.435*)

But it must be said that not only the two brothers, but the entire gathering from Ayodhya looked upon the pomp and profusion as mere trash! They were not charmed in the least. The scents, the bouquets of fragrant flowers, the juicy fruits and the attractive tasty dishes struck them with awe. The two resplendent seats

specially set up for Bharatha and Satrughna defied all description. (*RKRV Part I p.435*)

When all was ready, the Sage invited everyone inside the specially erected Hall, where they were to partake of the banquet. They entered that marvel of beauty. The Royal Preceptor and his consort were led to high seats reserved for them. The queens too entered the place, covered and cordoned off for their sake, and bending under the weight of sorrow, they too complied with the command of the Sage. At this time, the bright-faced disciples of the Sage brought in the brothers, Bharatha and Satrughna, with all due honour. In accordance with the practice of that renowned Hermitage. The young ascetics stood on both sides of the passage, waving yak tail whisks and reciting scriptural hymns. They approached the magnificent seats set for them; but as soon as they came near, they bowed their heads and fell on the floor, in respectful obeisance. They took the whisks from the hands of the pupils, and started waving them reverentially, standing one on each side of the Lion Thrones! They were adoring the thrones, instead of sitting in them! All present were surprised at this gesture, this homage offered to the empty Thrones. (*RKRV Part I p.435-436*)

When the Sage invited them to occupy the Thrones, Bharatha and Satrughna fell at his feet and implored, “Master! These Thrones belong to Sita and Rama, and not to us. We have no right to them. In this holy hermitage, those two alone, Goddess Lakshmi and Narayana, have the title to sit on Lion Thrones. We are their servants. Permit us to serve them thus.” At this, the ascetics and the entire assembly were thrilled with joyous

appreciation. They extolled among themselves the immense depth of the devotion that the brothers had for Rama. Tears of joy flowed from their eyes. The monks were astounded at their faith and its steadfastness. (*RKR V Part I p.436*)

The brothers offered the elaborate fare that was brought as food to the Thrones picturing in their minds the charming figures of Sita and Rama, occupying them. A little while after, they broke off small particles from the offered dishes and placing them adoringly on their eyelids, they ate them as sacramental food. The elders, ministers, aides and the residents of Ayodhya craved pardon from the Sage Bharadwaja for not partaking of the food, since, as they said, they could not relish any food, overwhelmed as they were by the agony of separation from Rama. They refused to eat, for they felt that the Darsan of Rama alone could give them the sense of contentment. That was the nectarine feast they yearned for. They were plunged in a gloom as deep as the standard of the Sage's hospitality was high. They said they were too engrossed in their anxiety for the sight of Rama to entertain the idea of food. The sage had finally to accede to their wish to be left alone. He could not prevail upon them to sit down at the feast. (*RKR V Part I p. 436-437*)

Everyone got ready to start for the forest, even as early as the first intimations of dawn. They prostrated before the Sage, secured his blessings and his permission before they left the hermitage. (*RKR V Part I p. 437*)

Rama stays in Bharadwaja’s hermitage on his way back to Ayodhya:

After living for fourteen years in the forest and after the death of Ravana, Rama was returning to Ayodhya along with Lakshmana, Sugriva and various other attendants. On the way, He reached the *ashram* of Bharadwaja. (*SSB 1977 p.52*) 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. (*RKR Part II p.271*)

Rama knew very well the agony in the mind of Bharatha¹⁰⁴. Rama knows that if He delayed even a little beyond fourteen years, Bharatha would probably enter fire and destroy himself. So, Rama sent Hanuman in advance to Bharatha to tell him about his impending arrival. (*SSB 1977 p.52*)

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*)

IN THE DWAPARA

One day, Krishna and Balarama along with the cowherd boys were playing on the banks of river Yamuna. They were jumping from one branch to the other on trees. Some of them were tired. At that time, sages Vamana and Bharadwaja came to the banks of Yamuna. They asked the cowherd boys to show them a

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter, *Bharatha* - **Bharatha has the premonition of Rama’s return:**

suitable and safe location where the waters were shallow so that they could have a bath. Krishna and Balarama jumped down from the trees. Bharadwaja at once recognised that Krishna was the *Paramatma* and Balarama represented *Jivatma*. He folded his hands in reverence and requested Krishna to show them a suitable location for having a bath. Krishna jumped into the water and showed them a safe place. He told them that he would keep sumptuous food ready for them. The cowherd boys were wondering as to how Krishna would provide food for the sages as He had not brought any food with Him. In those days there were no tiffin carriers. After the sages had completed their bath, Krishna opened a bag which appeared from nowhere. As he opened the bag, the entire place was filled with sweet aroma of rice boiled in milk. He served the food in a plate and requested them to eat. The cowherd boys were as restless as monkeys. They would not keep quiet.

They repeatedly asked Krishna, “Where did You get the food from?” Krishna silenced them saying, it was not proper to indulge in excessive talk in the presence of sages. The sages performed the *Sandhya* worship and started partaking of food. They asked, “Krishna, who prepared this food?” Krishna replied, “My mother Yashoda.” They said, they had not eaten anything more delicious and expressed their gratitude to Him. Brahma, who was observing these mysterious happenings, was wonderstruck at Krishna’s mighty powers. He wanted to play a trick with Krishna. One day as the cowherd boys were ecstatically playing with Krishna and Balarama, Brahma made the cows and calves disappear from the scene. He even made the cowherd boys disappear. Krishna knew that it was Brahma’s

trick. He at once created all the cowherd boys, cows and calves by His Will. These cowherd boys returned to their respective homes with their cows and calves. They were identical in all respects to the cowherd boys whom Brahma had hidden somewhere. Even their parents could not find any difference. Life went on as usual, with the cowherd boys taking their cows and calves for grazing every day in the company of Balarama and Krishna. This continued for one full year. Brahma felt ashamed and accepted defeat. He sought Krishna's pardon and returned all the cowherd boys, cows and calves. As he returned them, the existing ones which Krishna had created earlier, disappeared at once. In this manner, Krishna performed many stupendous feats right from His childhood. (*SSS Vol.35 p.225-227*)

Castes and Gunas clarified by Sage Bhrigu in answer to the question raised by Sage Bharadwaja:

In the Shanti Parva (*Mahabharata*), Sage Bhrigu has elaborately answered a question raised about this development by Sage Bharadwaja. It runs as follows: "Brahmins fond of worldly pleasures affected by egoism, subject to anger, lust and other passions have Rajo Guna mixed with their innate Satwic nature, and so they are classified as Kshatriya. In fact, all Brahmins cannot be predominantly Satwic in nature, nor can all of them be devoted to pure ritual activity. Those who do not adhere to the Satwic ideal of Truth and who evince the qualities of Tamo Guna mixed with Rajasic traits, those who are mostly both Tamasic and Rajasic were classed as Vaisyas. The rest, who spend their lives in occupations involving violence, who do not practise cleanliness and who are bogged down in Tamasic means of

livelihood were classed as Sudras. Thus, the Brahmins denoted various castes and ensured the safety and security of human society. This is the assertion of the scriptures, the Sruthis.”
(Sathya Sai Vahini p.214)

11.6 PARASURAMA

PARASURAMA

Parasurama is the sixth avatar of Vishnu and belongs to the Treta yuga, and is the son of a Brahmin father Jamadagni and mother Renuka. He is considered one of the seven immortal (Chiranjeevi) human. He received an axe after undertaking a terrible penance to please Shiva, from whom he learned the methods of warfare and other skills. He fought back the advancing seas thus saving the lands of Konkan and Malabar. The coastal area of Kerala State along with the Konkan region, which is the coastal region of Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra States, is also sometimes called Parasurama Kshetra (Parasurama's country). Parasurama is said to be a Brahmakshatriya ("warrior Brahman"), the first warrior saint. Shri Parasurama is worshiped as a Founder (Mool Purush) of Chitpavan and Daivadnya Brahmin Communities.

Parashu means axe in Sanskrit, hence the name Parasurama literally means 'Rama with the axe'. He is also known as Parasurama, Bhṛgupati, Bhargava, Bhargava Rama, and Jamdagni (Sanskrit: jamdagni as Jamdagni's son).

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

ABOUT PARASURAMA

Parasurama is one of the *avatars* of Vishnu. ((SSS Vol.19 p.155)

Parasurama¹⁰⁵: An incarnation of Vishnu as man, born to destroy the arrogance of the wicked Kshatriya kings. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Parasurama was the son of the sage Jamadagni. (SSS Vol.24 p.263)

THE ENCOUNTER OF RAMA WITH PARASURAMA

The Divine Marriage

When Rama won the hand of Sita by stringing the bow of Siva in the court of Janaka, His marriage with Sita was performed in Mithila amidst great rejoicings. The people of Mithila were beside themselves with joy and sang merry songs. Dasaratha, all his ministers, and all family members prominently participated in the marriage. After the marriage function, all left for Ayodhya. (SSS Vol.42 p.84-86) Janaka sent a large retinue of chariots, horses, and elephants along with the four brides. (SSB 1996 p.35)

Bad Omens follow the Marriage Party:

Dasaratha was proceeding towards Ayodhya, with his sons and daughters-in-law, the sages and scholars, army units of infantry, elephantry, cavalry and chariotry, and citizens of his empire.

¹⁰⁵ Also spelt as Parashu-Rama (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Suddenly, they observed certain bad omens¹⁰⁶ and they had a premonition that something serious was about to happen. Dasaratha approached Vashishta and consulted him, “Master! What a surprise is this! Dark clouds are thickening and howling. The beasts on earth are tramping around us full circle. They should not behave so, isn’t it? What can be the reason? What does it indicate? I am getting apprehensive about these omens.” Vashishta could see what these portents meant by means of his divine insight. He said, “Oh King! These are signs of some terrible event nearing us. The clouds are roaring frightfully. But considering the fact that the beasts on earth are circumambulating our chariots, this much can be inferred; the disaster that threatens us will be averted. Therefore, you need have no anxiety.” Vashishta instilled faith and confidence in Dasaratha, and they awaited events.

Suddenly, the wind grew into a fierce cyclonic storm! Even as they were looking on, giant trees were pulled up by their roots and they fell with alarming noise. Even the mountain peaks rolled one over the other. Thunderous explosions rent the air, as if the earth itself was breaking into pieces. Those in one chariot could not see the vehicle before or behind them, so thick was the dust that rose all around! Horses and elephants started running wildly in panic. Foot soldiers dropped unconscious; others stood petrified by a weird fear. (*RKRV Part I p.195-196*)

They began to think, “What is this great impediment after the glorious celebration of the marriage?” *Good and bad always follow each other.* After experiencing great joy in Mithila, they

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter, *Sruthakeerthi - Sruthakeerthi -An expert in reading the Omens:*

were confronted with a difficult situation on their way to Ayodhya.
(*SSS Vol.42 p.86*)

Dreadful figure stands in front of them:

Vashishta, Dasaratha and the four sons were the only persons who were unafraid in that entire huge concourse! All the rest were drained of vigour and vitality—for good reason, too. For the ground and air were enveloped in darkness. The darkness was heightened by blinding flashes of light! And a dreadful figure, with terror-striking eyes, stood before them.

His head had a crown of thickly matted hair. He had a giant double-edged axe on his shoulder. He had on the shoulder a bag of arrows that shone like lightning streaks. He appeared to them like the forehead-eyed Siva on His way to destroy the mighty demon rulers of the Triple Fortress! As soon as he came to view, Vashishta recognised him as Parasurama. But he wondered why he was so fierce with anger that day, even though all his rage against the Kshatriya clans had long ago subsided as a result of the campaigns in which he had destroyed them. He tried to discover what could have kindled the flame again from the cooled embers.
(*RKRV Part I p.196-197*)

Parasurama Challenges Rama:

Vashishta himself moved towards Parasurama with the traditional signs of welcome, like inviting him to wash his hands and asking permission to wash his feet. But though he accepted these marks of good will and heartfelt reception, Parasurama was staring at Rama with eyes like glowing cinders! Rama was however reacting with a charming smile, a smile which only fed the fumes of his anger! He raved loudly thus! “Oh son of Dasaratha! I have listened to your

exploits being praised by a thousand tongues. I heard also how you broke the Bow of Siva¹⁰⁷, as if it was just child's play. But all that is hearsay not directly seen by me. I have come now so that I can personally examine your valour. (*RKRV Part I p.197*)

“I have brought this divinely consecrated bow. It belonged to Jamadagni, my revered father. Show me your might, stringing it and fixing an arrow on it. Or else, come, engage me in fight!” He challenged Rama in this manner, in passionate anger. (*RKRV Part I p.197*)

Dasaratha's replies in Plaintive tones:

Rama was not affected by all this demonstration of anger. He kept on smiling coolly. “Oh Bhargavarama! I thought the vengeance you had nursed against the Kshatriyas had ended long ago. Why this relapse? Why this downfall, this absurdity? he asked. Just then, Dasaratha bent low and in plaintive tones, appealed to Parasurama thus: “Bhagawan! You are a Brahmin. You have won great renown. My sons are tender teenagers. Why develop vengeful hatred against them for no reason whatever? This ill becomes the high status of your lineage. Your forefathers studied the Vedas without intermission and performed rites and ceremonies with elaborate care. You yourself declared that day, when you entered on the Chandrayana Ritual that you will not

¹⁰⁷ Rama had won Sita by bending and breaking the bow of Siva; and thereby humbled the pride of the crowned heads that had come seeking Sita's hand. But, Parasurama was intoxicated with his own achievement, in defeating the Kshatriya rulers in twenty-one campaigns. That pride lowered the Divine Status of Parasurama and so, he could be felled in a moment by Rama who was to all appearance just a stripling! (*SSS Vol.4 p.4*)

handle any weapon thereafter. You said that your desires have been fulfilled. You did this before no less a God than Indra, gifting all the territories conquered by you to Kasyapa, yourselves resolving to spend the rest of your days in the performance of righteous deeds and the gaining of equanimity. (*RKRV Part I p.197-198*)

“You were all along engaged in austerities on the Mahendra Peak! And now quite contrary to your declared intentions, your mind is set upon destroying my dynasty and family. Is it not a terrible sin to act against one’s given word? At this breach of promise, of what use is austerity? There is no God higher than Truth, is there? You are challenging only Rama and you say you will fight only with him! If anything injurious happens to that son, my entire family will be plunged in dire calamity. Our lives will end the moment danger harms him. A Brahmin like you should not become responsible for the loss of so many lives! It is not only a sacrilege on Brahminhood, it is a heinous sin.” (*RKRV Part I p.198*)

The story of the two Bows - The Bow of Siva and Vishnu were made by Viswakarma:

Parasurama paid no heed to the words of Dasaratha. He did not give ear to them. He was casting his looks only on Rama. He said: “The Bow that you broke and this one, both, have come from Heaven. Viswakarma the Divine Artificer made them both. One was offered to Siva, for use against the Demons of the Triple Fortress; the other was entrusted to Vishnu. Once the demons were destroyed, Siva sent it to Emperor Devaratha, with the arrows that were used for the fight. Perhaps the bow had become frail and feeble, since the purpose for which it was offered had been

accomplished. It is no proof of might and heroism if such a bow is broken. (*RKRV Part I p.199*)

Parasurama ask Rama to break the Bow given to his forefathers by Lord Vishnu:

This bow has work yet to do and so it still retains its vigour and vitality. This bow is surcharged with efficacy and power. Take this, string it and break it as you did the other. That is the way to prove your strength and heroism. Do not strut about in pride that you have broken the Bow of Siva! Break this and write your name in the annals of the brave.”

“You may doubt my words that this is the Bow of Vishnu,” he continued. “Vishnu Himself kept this in the custody of Hrishika’s a great sage. He handed it over to his son, Jamadagni. (*RKRV Part I p.199*)

Parasurama narrates the story of his Vendetta:

Jamadagni is my father. He was the repository of tremendous merit acquired by austerity. He was so pure-hearted that he had no trace of hatred or vengeance in him. My father had renounced the use of weapons; yet, Karthaviryarjuna the wicked, killed him. It was a crime of unprecedented cruelty. No one had killed another so atrociously. I decided that I should not show mercy. I had to teach him a lesson. I vowed that I will destroy not only that monster, but all unrighteous kings. From that day, I have been cutting them to pieces and playing ball games with their heads. This Bow was with me in all those campaigns. I killed many wicked monarchs. I brought under subjugation the entire world. My anger at those who had killed my father cooled a little with this. I gave up the vendetta, and started a Vedic sacrifice. I invited Kasyapa for that

Yajna, since he was a great saint immersed in meritorious activity. I gave him the Earth which I had conquered as *dakshina* (ritual fees) for supervising the Yajna. Since then, I have been spending my days on the Mahendra Peak, with my mind immersed in peace and my intellect shining in spiritual splendour. (*RKRV Part I p.199-200*)

Parasurama replies to Dasaratha's plea and says that he is looking for complete renunciation:

“Your father asked me why I have again taken up this weapon and put on a challenging pose, in spite of my having renounced the path of vengeance and hatred. I shall answer him now Rama! Two bows were created in Heaven and came upon the earth. You have broken the Siva Bow. This alone remains now, intact. If this too is broken (it does not serve any purpose being with me, for its work is over) then, my renunciation will be complete. So I wish that this too is broken, or retained by you. I am waiting for this consummation. The moment has come; I am determined to utilise it, rather than let it go by or allow it to be misused. Perhaps, you doubt whether fighting is the best use to which time can be put? But the significance of the fight has to be looked into. It may be for the progress and welfare of the world. It may promote the suppression of the unrighteous and the encouragement of the good. You cannot pronounce war as undesirable, judging from a superficial point of view. Analyse the purpose. When a knife has to be sharpened, one has to hone it on a grindstone. No one can condemn the process as injurious to the knife. If the body is to derive strength from food, the food has to be placed between rows of hard teeth and ground into paste mercilessly. No one can condemn this process as violence exercised on the material. It may become necessary in order to provide Satwic food for either the

Body or the Body Politic, to have recourse to struggle, conflict and the apparent infliction of pain. (*RKRV Part I p.200-201*)

Break the Bow or fight a duel with me, Challenges Parasurama:

“Well, we are in the middle of the road, halfway through a journey. It is not proper to indulge in talk, standing here. Let us get to action. It is imperative we should start straightway. Come on! Either string this bow and break it in the process or fight a duel with me!” This was the call from Parasurama. (*RKRV Part I p.201*)

Lakshmana Fumes with anger and retorts in spite of Rama quieting him:

Lakshmana was fuming with anger, while listening to the challenge of Parasurama; he was about to intervene with a hot retort, when Rama quietened him saying, “This is not a matter concerning you. For the questions asked of me, I myself have to answer. It is against good manners for you to come between us. Let me handle this situation.” His affectionate and soft counsel made Lakshmana desist. But when Parasurama started laughing at Rama and ridiculing him for not accepting his challenge as soon as it was thrown, Lakshmana could not control his reaction of resentment. (*RKRV Part I p.201*)

He shouted, “Oh Bhargava! This is not much of a task for Him who broke the Bow of Siva! To break this little bow, why do you challenge Rama? This is a Brahmin weapon! It is just a blade of *Kusa* grass. I can myself break it, in a trice effortlessly, even while playing with it; for this petty task why asks Rama. I have no need to transfer the assignment.” When Lakshmana uttered these words, Parasurama became even more inflamed. But Rama took things

coolly and calmly. He smiled at Lakshmana and pacified him by his soft speech. The more enraged Parasurama became the quieter and more restrained was Rama's reaction. (*RKRV Part I p202*)

Sita watched the scene with amusement and instilled courage to her sisters:

Soon, Parasurama lost control of himself. He gave free reign to his tongue and started pouring rank abuse. This caused some consternation in Dasaratha's heart. The maids and servants hid themselves from the furious onslaught. The four arms of the army were shaken by fear. The Pundits were terrified. Sita, however, watched the scene with amusement. She was not in the least agitated. She was not affected by the slightest apprehension. She was instilling courage and confidence in the hearts of Urmila, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi, telling them that he was a lame jackal before the Lion that Rama was. When they saw Rama reprimanding Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna had no mind to intervene. Or else, they too would have joined the fray and asked Rama for permission to fight or take up the challenge. They awaited the orders of Rama and kept away. Vashishta could know the past and the future and so, He realised that the incident was but a scene in the Divine Drama. (*RKRV Part I p.202-203*)

Rama takes the Vishnu Bow and Parasurama get debilitated:

He was silent and unshaken. Ramachandra spoke with profound calm. "Parasurama! You are a Brahmin. For a Kshatriya you are an object of worship, on the basis of caste. You are a kinsman of the revered Viswamitra. I don't feel it proper to kill such a high caste Brahmin. Nor is it proper to aim this holy weapon against you. You yourself declared just now that it belongs to the Realm of the Gods, that it has so far destroyed every enemy, city and fort

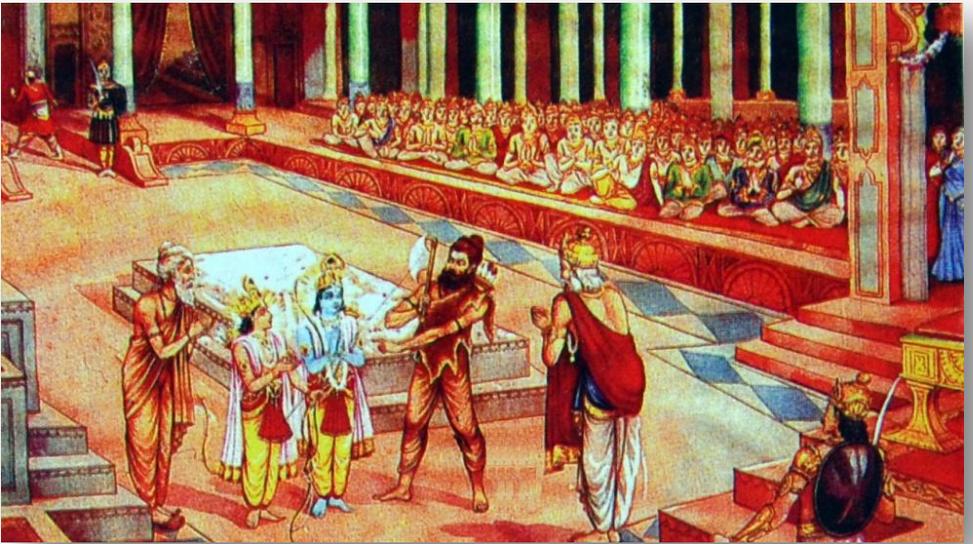


Figure 15: Parasurama Confronts Rama

Source of the Photo

Description **English:** Art on a page of Sribhargavaraghaviyam

Date 1 April 2011

Source <http://jagadgururambhadracharya.org/photogallery/Literature>

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against which it has been used, and that it can overwhelm and defeat the strength and pride of whomsoever it encounters. Is it not sheer waste to make it unserviceable? So, choose any one of these two alternatives and tell me: Shall I use it to prevent you from moving about on your feet? Or shall I prevent you from attaining the higher worlds that you have earned by means of austerities?” When he heard these words, Parasurama was even more enraged. His eyes turned red with anger. He rushed forward towards Rama, exclaiming, “What are you prattling?” Rama took hold of the Vishnu Bow that was slung on his shoulder, with a derisive laugh, which hurt his pride. Lo! No sooner did the weapon reach the hands of Rama than Parasurama got debilitated¹⁰⁸. He lost all energy and vitality. Rama shone in such added splendour that no eye could stand that blaze. He stood there as if countless lamps were lit on one spot, radiating blinding light all around. When the authentic wielder of that bow, Narayana Himself, held it in His grasp, the bow too acquired added lustre. A triumphal aura surrounded the bow and lightning streamed from it. The gods gathered in the sky and showered flowers on Rama holding the Bow. The auspicious sound of music filled the sky. (*RKR V Part I p.203-204*)

¹⁰⁸ Parasurama came across Rama and challenged him when he was returning to Ayodhya after his marriage. He had won Sita by bending and breaking the bow of Siva; and thereby humbled the pride of the crowned heads that had come seeking Sita’s hand. But, Parasurama was intoxicated with his own achievement, in defeating the Kshatriya rulers in twenty- one campaigns. That pride lowered the Divine Status of Parasurama and so, he could be felled in a moment by Rama who was to all appearance just a stripling! (*SSS Vol.4 p. 4*)

Parasurama offers all the Powers won by him to Rama:

Meanwhile, Parasurama was full of smiles. He said, “Rama! Did you notice what happened! I have experienced the delight of the Divine Manifestation, your Divine Splendour. In days gone by, I gifted this earthly region to Kasyapa. Receiving it, the sage Kasyapa declared that I should not enter his dominion again and even if I did, I should not spend a night therein. He pronounced a curse upon me, on these lines. Well. It is already getting dark. I can no longer be present here. I have to hurry fast to the Mahendra Mountain. Through my incomparable austerity, I have won high heavenly regions. Break the bow and with it, break all the power I had won. All the power I have in me is yours. Oh Rama, watch this, I am offering to you the power earned by me.” (*RKR Part I p.204*)

Thus saying, he came near and embraced Rama with both hands clasped firm around him. At that moment, three facets of Divinity that had subsisted in him so long came forth from him and merged in Rama. Then Parasurama addressed Rama thus: “Rama! The world cannot easily understand the mystery of the Divine. Even those like me who have earned great power through denial and detachment and ascetic practices rely more on their own spiritual achievements, ignoring the influence of the Divine Strategy of Vishnu. (*RKR Part I p.204*)

“I have, therefore, set about to make known your reality and genuine power to the world. I have given you as an offering the powers I had. I have also proved once again that you are the mighty Vishnu, the God endowed with unique power, the God who directs the Drama of the Universe. There is nothing that is devoid of you, nothing that is not you. You are all. Yours is all. I

had the good fortune of wielding for some time your divine bow, and as a consequence, I earned some reverence from the world. That is the merit I have won. This is my offering.” With this Parasurama disappeared. (*RKRV Part I p.205*)

INNER PERCEPTIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PARASURAMA

Parasurama recognised the Divinity of Rama:

While (*Dasaratha and his sons with their brides*) were travelling, they heard a loud voice saying, “Stop!” Parasurama appeared on the scene, much to the shock and surprise of everyone. Parasurama said to Rama, “Oh Rama! I have heard that You have broken the bow of Shiva. The bow of Shiva is of no consequence, and it is not at all hard to lift it. If You really have strength, You should break this weapon of mine.” So saying Parasurama hurled his weapon at the feet of Rama. Rama calmly picked it up and broke the weapon. Parasurama at once fell at the feet of Rama. People have a distorted opinion about Parasurama, describing him as a very egoistic sage who itched to fight with Rama. Parasurama actually came there for the divine purpose¹⁰⁹ of handing over to Rama one of the sixteen splendours (*kalas*) he had with him. A *Poornavathar* has sixteen splendours. Lord Rama possessed twelve *kalas* and his brothers had three *kalas*. The remaining one *kala* was with Parasurama. While bowing to the feet of Rama, he passed on the sixteenth *kala* to Him. (*SSB 1996 p.35*)

Implicit Obedience:

A similar incident occurred in the life of Parasurama, son of the sage Jamadagni. One day when Jamadagni's wife went to the river to fetch water, the king Vichitravirya was going in his chariot. She was a pure-hearted lady. She just

¹⁰⁹ 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. (*SSB 1977 p.17*)

looked up to see who was going in the chariot. She was struck for a moment by the beauty of Vichitravirya. When she returned to the hermitage, Jamadagni ordered Parasurama to cut off the head of his mother. Parasurama did not flinch for a moment. Carrying out his father's command implicitly, he cut off the head of his mother.

Jamadagni then asked his son: "What boon do you want? You have implicitly carried out my command." Parasurama said: "Dear father! Restore the life of my mother." The sage gave back her life. Implicit obedience merits its own reward. This is the inner secret of how the Divine works. (*SSS Vol.24 p.263*)

How Kerala acquired the name Parasurama Kshetra

Kerala is a land that has won the love of the Lord in a special way. In olden days, it was noted for its devotion and godliness. Kerala is also known as Parasurama *Kshetra*---the sacred land of Parasurama. How did it acquire that name? Parasurama is one of the *avatars* of Vishnu. When Parasurama's father (Jamadagni) was beheaded by a *Kshatriya* king, his mother Renuka, cried in anguish: "Rama! Rama!" Parasurama, who was away from the *ashram*, could ethereally hear the cries of his mother from afar and rushed home. He counted that his mother had called his name twenty one times. On reaching the *ashram* he saw his father's head severed from the body. The horrible crime had been committed by Kartavirya's sons. Parasurama took a vow to wage war against the vile *kshatriya* rulers twenty one times and end their rule all over the earth.

Parasurama accomplished his mission by defeating the *Kshatriya* kings twenty one times and came to his *ashram* to pray to his ancestors for restoring his father's life. The sage Bharadwaja, to whose *gotra* Jamadagni belonged, appeared before Parasurama and restored Jamadagni to life by placing the head and body together.

After this, Parasurama felt that the purpose of his advent had been achieved and as he had no desire to be a ruler, he made a gift of all the territories he had conquered to the Sage Kasyapa. He felt that having given away everything, it would not be right for him to remain on the land he had gifted. He decided to reclaim land from the sea and settle down on that territory for the rest of his life.

It is this area that is known as Parasurama *Kshetra*--also known as Kerala¹¹⁰. He performed penance on a mountain called *Mahesa*, which is situated in Kerala. (*SSS Vol.19 p.155-156*)

Parasurama gave away his powerful weapons

Rama defeated Parasurama with love. Parasurama gave away his powerful weapons to Rama and said to Him, “Rama! You are now shining with sixteen Kalas.” Rama was an embodiment of truth. There is no power greater than Truth. Hence Parasurama surrendered to Rama. With the surrender of Parasurama, Rama’s power became full and complete. (*SSB 2002 p.80*)

Parasurama is a Divine Form God has Assumed

Suka said to Parikshith, “Listen, Oh King! God is omnipotent, He knows no distinction between the possible and the impossible. His Wizardry, His Sport, His Play, His Pranks cannot be described with the vocabulary that man commands. Though He has no *Rupa* or Form, He can assume the Form of the Universal Person, embodying all Creation in His Form. He is One but He makes Himself Many. Matsya, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Kalki—people relate to each other that these are the Divine Forms He has assumed. But that is not describing Him as vast as His magnificence. We have to visualise all forms as His. The vitality of every being is His Breath. In short, every bit in Creation is He, the manifestation of His Will. There is nothing distinct or separate from Him.

“But for the protection of the world, for the upholding of Dharma, for fulfilling the yearnings of devotees, He wills specially and assumes a special Form and moves in the world. He confers joy on the devotees by His divine acts, which convince them of His Advent. (**Bhagavatha Vahini p.213**)

Karna

Karna, a great hero of the Mahabharatha war was searching for a Guru who can teach him the intricacies of the warfare and the methods by which he could win over Arjuna. He knew that there was no other Guru except Parasurama for this purpose. He also knew that Parasurama was a bitter enemy of Kshatriya class and he would not teach any other person except a Brahmin, the *Astras* and

¹¹⁰ **Land of three Avatars of Vishnu**

Kerala is a region which is hallowed by the advent of three *Avatars* of Vishnu Narasimha, Vamana and Parasurama. Siddhashram is a sacred place in Kerala.

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Sastras (weapons directed by chanting *mantras*). However, he was determined to learn these techniques somehow.

He therefore approached Parasurama, disguised as a Brahmin. He could draw his attention and win his favour with his humility and obedience also his sharp intellect. Parasurama recognised Karna's intense yearning and eligibility to learn the techniques of *Astras* and *Sastras* and finally agreed to teach him. Under his tutelage, he taught the techniques of directing several *Astras* and *Sastras* to Karna. Karna during that period could demonstrate his total faith in the Guru and win his confidence.

One day, Parasurama put his head on the lap of Karna and slept for some time. He was enjoying deep sleep, in the meanwhile a hornet got under the thigh of Karna and started boring the thigh, causing severe pain and loss of blood. But, Karna silently suffered the pain lest he may cause disturbance to his Guru. After sometime, the blood flowed under the head of Parasurama wetting that part of the body. He woke up and enquired Karna with great surprise, "Tell me who are you? Surely, you are not a Brahmin. It is only a Kshatriya who can bear such huge loss of blood."

Karna said, "Swami! Pardon me I told a lie so that I may become your disciple and learn knowledge from you." Parasurama became very angry. He cursed Karna, "The knowledge you have gained by speaking untruth will not be useful to you when required." (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part II p. 93-94*)

11.7 SAGE SARABHANGA

SAGE SARABHANGA

Sage Sarabhangha led a celibate life, constantly meditating on the name of god. The power of his austerity was such that Indra, the lord of the three worlds wanted to take him to the higher loka on his celestial car. Sage Sharabhangha refuses the invitation of Indra to come to heaven, but awaits the arrival of Rama to see him with his own eyes. After seeing Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, and also showing next course of their journey, that Sage enters the yogic fire and ascends to Brahma's abode.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

SARABHANGA¹¹¹ : A sage blessed with immolation in Rama's presence. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Sarabhangha's Devotion:

Once Indra, the Lord of the Devas decided to take sage Sarabhangha to heaven in recognition of his intense *thapas* (penance). He approached Sarabhangha with his entourage and

¹¹¹ Also spelt as Sharabhangha

invited him to visit heaven. Sage Sarabhanga then replied, “Sir! I have no desire for heaven. Lord Narayana in the form of Sree Ramachandra will be visiting my *Ashram* (hermitage). I don’t consider our visit to heaven is more important than the darshan of the Lord Narayana. If you wish, I will come to heaven after having the darshan of Sri Ramachandra. Till then, I will not leave my Ashram. (*Beacons of Divine Wisdom Part I p.6*)

Rama in Sarabhanga’s Ashram

Rama entered the famous hermitage of the sage Sarabhanga. Even while he was nearing the Ashram, the ascetics and monks were talking among themselves of the havoc caused by the inroads of Ravana, the demon King. When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana appeared before them in the midst of their conversation, they sensed the meaning of their visit and knew that their fears would soon come to an end. When the sage Sarabhanga saw the divinely charming figure of Rama, he could scarce believe his eyes. He wondered whether it was a dream, or an illusion, or some strange experience caused by meditation mania. But soon, he realised the genuineness of his good fortune. He was overwhelmed with the ecstasy of winning his long-desired goal. He knew that his asceticism had at last been blessed by the fruition of his yearning. He offered them profuse hospitality.

He extolled Rama to his heart’s content. “Rama! You are the Heavenly Swan moving majestically on the waters that fill the minds of the sages. Ah! This day, I have realised the Goal of Life,” he said. “Rama! I am unaware of any spiritual discipline worth the name. It was possible for me to win you through just

one path, the path of Love. My eyes have seen you now. They need look on nothing else. And you have given word that day that you would fulfil the wishes of the sages. Well, now you have to stand by that word. My wish is this: Stand before me in this most charming form, until my breath leaves this body. I wish to cast off this body even while my gaze is fixed on you,” he appealed.

Within minutes, a pyre was set up. He ascended it and it was lit, with Sarabhanga sitting unconcerned on top, with eyes shining in joy at the ecstasy of looking on at Rama. The eyelids did not quiver. The gaze did not slacken. With the forms of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana imprinted on his heart, Sarabhanga reduced his body into a handful of ashes. The blue placid waters of his heart reflected the blue form of Rama, whom he had adored until the very last. His soul merged in the Universal that was before him.

Though at first the Asramites were grieving over the departure of their Preceptor and Master, they soon realised that he had the unique fortune of a rare blessing. God himself had come in human form and blessed him with mergence in his majesty and glory. They felt that they too had shared in that gift of Grace. They adored Rama and extolled him in various ways. They shouted “Hail! Victory! Victory!” and taking the ashes of their Master, they applied it on their brows in reverent gratitude.

The news of the immolation of Sarabhanga soon brought to that hermitage residents from other ashrams as well. They fell at the feet of Rama and praised him and his mission of compassion. “Lord! How fortunate was Sarabhanga,” they cried, “Many a

sage has fallen prey to the voracious ferocity of the Rakshasa tribe of demons in this area. But Sarabhanga was blessed by the Lord Himself. He offered his body and life to the Lord Himself. “Lord! Save us from these rapacious enemies. Let us progress in our spiritual exercises and disciplines, without these demonic raids. And at the end of it all, O Lord, bless us with the fruit we strive for: Your Presence before our Vision,” they pleaded. *(RKR V Part II p.6-9)*

11.8 SAGE SUTHEEKSHNA

SAGE SUTHEEKSHNA

SUTHEEKSHNA: A hermit whom Rama and Sita visited in the forest; brother of Agastya

- *Glossary of the Vahinis*

A sage Sutheekshna by name came forward and prostrated before Rama. He was the pupil of the renowned Agastya. He was an incomparable devotee and his mind was saturated with love for Rama. He had steady faith that God can be won by Love alone. He could not picture before his mind's eye 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. He said, "Lord! Did you come so far into this region just to bless me? Can you not merge me into the Lord you are? Having come upon the earth with this visible form, do you still wish that I should adore, as hitherto, the Formless Absolute? No. I love this Form, and this Name. I do not know any rite or ritual. I know only that you, the embodiment of Love can be attained through love. Yearning is the only earning I have accumulated. That is the only asceticism

I have subjected myself to. Tell me, is that not enough? Oh, Saviour from the travail of Birth and Death! No form of worship is so effective as service of the Lord through Love, isn't it? Singing your glory, meditating on it, and deriving unspeakable bliss in the process—can anything else yield greater joy?" he said. Sutheekshna danced about, unaware of where he was or what he was doing. Tears flowed in streams down his cheeks. He appeared insane for all who could not gauge the inner joy he was experiencing. Rama knew the urge within the Sage. He drew him near himself, and embraced him most lovingly. He spoke soft and sweet, to bring him round to a consciousness of his surroundings. While Rama was holding his hands, the great sage entered the supreme state of *Samadhi*. He became a doll, unmoved and immovable. Rama brought him back into consciousness. As soon as he came to, he fell at the feet of Rama, falling flat on the ground.

He raised his hands above his head and joining palms in adoration; he expressed his joy and took delight therein. He said, "Lord! You are the Conflagration that destroys the Forest of Delusion in which man has lost himself. You are the Solar Orb that makes it possible for the Lotuses of the Hearts of Good Men to bloom in beauty and fragrance. You are the King of Beasts, come to destroy the brood of Demonic Elephants. You are the Eagle come to hunt down and destroy the bird that flits into birth and flits out of life, in a recurring cycle of joy and grief. Lord! Your eyes are as charming as Lotuses. My two eyes cannot drink in all the beauty of your effulgent Form. You are the Moon that sheds cool light to enrapture the twin Chakora birds, namely, the eyes of Sita. You swim happily as the Celestial Swan in the

placid lakes that shine in the hearts of sages. You are the Garuda Bird that preys upon and destroys the serpents that breed in the minds of doubters and unbelievers. All cruelty, confusion and calamity will be burnt away when a tiny glance from your eye falls on them.” He extolled Rama thus and in various other forms, and derived great joy at getting the chance. He also utilised the chance to gaze upon the Lord, and to have His Image imprinted on his heart. He was not conscious of the passage of time or the needs of the body. He did not wink once while looking on and drinking deep the glory of Rama.

Rama watched him for a while and then he raised him up with his hands upon his shoulders. He said, “Sutheekshna! You are endowed with all desirable virtues. Ask from me anything you wish, for I shall bless you as you desire.” The sage replied, “O, Friend and Kinsman of the Distressed! My wish is this: Reside ever in the depths of my heart, with Sita and Lakshmana.” Rama said, “So be it.” Then, with him as companion, Rama moved forward towards the ashram of Agastya, with Sita and Lakshmana following him. (*RKRV Part II p.9-12*)

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.

- ***Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba***

11.9 ADIKAVI VALMIKI

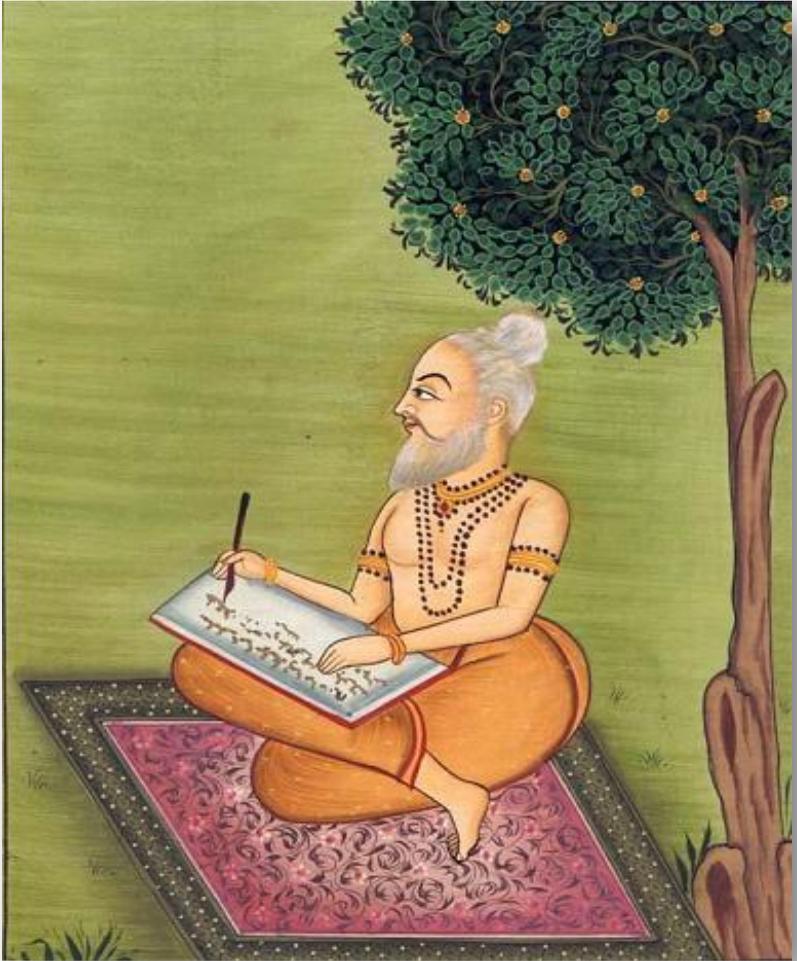


Figure 16: Adikavi Valmiki

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Description Valmiki escribe el Ramayana

Source en.wikipedia.org

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ADIKAVI VALMIKI

Valmiki was the poet harbinger in Sanskrit literature. He is the author of the epic Ramayana, based on the attribution in the text of the epic itself. He is revered as the Adi Kavi, which means First Poet, for he discovered the first shloka i.e. first verse, which set the base and defined the form to Sanskrit poetry.

Valmiki was the son of Sumali. Maharishi Valmiki was born in a shudra family. His birth name was Ratnakara. When everyone left to travel south, Sumali took his son and wife and moved near the bank of Vipasa River (Northern India). The Uttara Khanda tells the story of Valmiki's early life, as an unnamed highway robber who used to rob people before killing them. Other versions name him Valya Meet. Robbing people who passed by was the only source of money for him.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

PRAYER TO VALMIKI

Kujantam rama rameti madhuram madruraksaram;

Aruhya kavita sakham vande valmiki kokilam

“I salute Valmiki, the cuckoo, who, perching on the tree of Poesy, melodiously sings the sweet syllables – Rama, Rama”

valmikermunisimhasya kavitanacarinah

srvan ramakathanadam ko na yati param gatim

He who hears the roar - the story of Rama - of the lion - Valmiki, the sage, who roams the forest of poetry, attains the supreme state

- *Valmiki Ramayana*

VALMIKI¹¹²: The saint-poet who wrote the Ramayana. (*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

BIRTH

Valmiki was not a man of high birth. (*SSS Vol.19 p.147*)

Valmiki belonged to hunter class. (*Jnana Vahini p.30*)

HIS BACKGROUND

*Valmiki, before he became a great sage, was known as Ratnakara*¹¹³. Valmiki was a brave dacoit; *he used his courage and adventurousness in vicious and wicked ways*¹¹⁴; he was an intrepid highway robber *who waylaid and killed hundreds without hesitation; he was the slave of passion*¹¹⁵ *and emotion*¹¹⁶, dreaded by all who journeyed on that road. One day, the Seven Sages happened to pass along that fateful road, *they took pity on*

¹¹² Also Spelt as Vaalmeeki

¹¹³ *SSS Vol.32 Part II p.118*

¹¹⁴ *SSS Vol.19 p.129*

¹¹⁵ *Rajas* (passion) was the predominant quality in his make-up. (*SSS Vol.7 p.302*)

¹¹⁶ *SSS Vol.7 p.349*

him and wanted to light the lamp of wisdom in him.¹¹⁷; they counselled patience, forbearance and self-inquiry¹¹⁸; they revealed to him how wicked his actions were, and painted before his mind's eye the horrors he was becoming heir to as a result. They told him that those who now enjoyed the fruits of his robbery will not be sharers of those horrors, for, he alone was the culprit and he alone will have to suffer the punishment. (*Divine Discourse, Prashanthi Nilayam, November 1971*)

They urged him to give up his wicked actions. Ratnakara said he could not do so, since it was the only way to feed his wife and children. Then the *sapta rishis* asked him to find out from his wife and children whether they were prepared to share the sin he committed for their sake. Ratnakara went home and asked his wife and children, “Are you prepared to share my sin just as you share my booty every day?” They replied in the negative. His wife said that he was responsible for the merit or sin he committed. This incident opened his eyes. He went back to the *sapta rishis*, fell at their feet, and prayed for guidance. They told him to contemplate on Lord Rama and chant His incessantly. Ratnakara did accordingly. (*SSS Vol.32 Part II p.118-119*)

He left off his evil pursuit and forsook family, profession and wealth. He retired into the jungle and plunged into the severest austerities. He became a New Hero, the hero of a new type of adventure. He became a great sage, honoured by posterity as the First Poet, the author of the Ramayana.

¹¹⁷ *SSS Vol.32 Part II p.118*

¹¹⁸ *SSS Vol.7 p.349*

He gave up *toddy* and *arrack*, that is to say, the senses and their intoxicating poisons; he developed a taste for milk and curds, the *Satwic*¹¹⁹ (pure) virtues, mastery over himself, the victory that confers the highest and the purest Joy. (*Divine Discourse, Prashanthi Nilayam, November 1971*)

Through that experience, one can become a knower of the *Brahman (Jnani)*. Ratnakara, who led the life of a highway man, became the sage Valmiki after prolonged meditation on the name of Rama¹²⁰. (*SSS Vol.19 p.196-197*) Valmiki was covered by the ant-hill that grew over him; people discovered him by the sound of *Rama nama* that emanated from that mound¹²¹. (*SSS Vol.4 p.185*) He got the illumination out of which the Ramayana was born. (*SSS Vol.19 p.197*)

¹¹⁹ Valmiki turned heroically into the path of Ram (giving up the path of *kama* (lust)), and achieved immortality, immortal fame as the narrator of Rama's story. From the *Rajasic* (passionate) stage, he transformed himself into *Satwic* (balanced). The spiritual adventure, the spiritual leap from darkness into light needs extraordinary courage, and Divine Grace is the reward for courage. (*SSS Vol.7 p.349*)

¹²⁰ Love God and no distraction can turn you from the thought of God. When his heroism, bravery and persistence turned Godwards in a flash; he became so ardent an ascetic that an ant-hill grew over him as he sat unmoved. (*SSS Vol.7 p.302-303*)

¹²¹ Ignore the *deha* (body) so that you may discover the *dehi* (indweller); do not get engrossed in outer finery but delve deep and discover the inner splendour. (*SSS Vol.4 p.185*) *There has to be a complete absence of body consciousness. It was by forgetting the body completely while chanting the Name of Rama that Ratnakara, the dacoit, became Valmiki the supreme poet (who gave the Ramayana to the world). He was so completely absorbed in chanting the name that he was oblivious to the anthill that had grown over him. (SSS Vol.25 p.76-77)*

Valmiki, who was a hunter in his early life, became a sage and the author of the immortal Ramayana by meditating on the name Rama¹²², taught to him by the Seven Sages. Association with the saintly persons and the chanting of Rama's name made him *the Adikavi* (the first poet). (*SSS Vol. 22 p.112*)

DURING RAMA'S EXILE

Valmiki Ashram – Rama's divinity as perceived by Valmiki and other sages

After finishing morning ablutions, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana started off to the next lap of their journey. Soon, they entered the fearsome recesses of the forest. The towering peaks, dark dreadful tangle of trees, and the deafening roar of flooded streams, produced a queer feeling of awe and mystery.

Right in the midst of that frightful area, they came upon a patch of garden, nursed and fostered by man, and upon it, a hermitage that was charming to behold. That was the ashram of the sage Valmiki. On one side of the hermitage rose the cliffs of a tall mountain. On the other side, far below, at the bottom of a deep trough, flowed a murmuring stream.

¹²² Valmiki, by meditating on the glory of Rama, was able to mould himself into the immortal poet who composed the Ramayana. He became an embodiment of that glory, and therefore, he could create that great epic. (*SSS Vol.17 p.47*)

The hermitage was a picture of beauty. It shone like a gem on that green carpet. Sita felt considerably relieved and assuaged when her eyes fell on that picture. Learning from his pupils that they had entered the garden, Valmiki emerged from the hermitage and appeared at the door. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana hurried forward and fell at the feet of the sage. The sage too, moved forward; and as if he had known them long, he welcomed them, with fond embrace. He invited all three to enter the hermitage. The sage Valmiki provided comfortable seats for Rama whom he loved as his very breath, and for Lakshmana and Sita. He called for fruits and edible tubers and placed them before the three. As desired by Valmiki, they partook of them, and expressed their pleasure. Valmiki sat before them, watching Rama and quenching the thirst of his eyes. He was filled with inexpressible delight. With utmost humility, Rama addressed the great sage thus: “Most venerable Sage! You are conversant with the past, the present and the future of all. So, the reason why I have entered this forest must be as clear to you as the berry in one’s palm. Nevertheless, I feel it right that I should discharge my duty of informing you why I am here, with my wife and brother.” Then Rama described how Queen Kaikeyi sent him into exile in the forest, and how brother Bharatha was to be crowned as ruler of the realm, according to the promise made by the father.

The sage listened to the story, and communicated his joy with a face lit with smiles. He said, “Rama! As you fulfilled their desires then, you have satisfied my desire now. My austerities, vows and yearning have at last yielded fruit today. I must confer on Kaikeyi my heartfelt gratitude and a share of the bliss I am

now enjoying.” Valmiki sat long in silence, with his eyes closed, while trying to keep within control the emotions of gratitude and joy surging inside him. Tears gathered in his eyes, tears of ananda, and they rolled down his cheeks in big drops that chased each other. Rama broke the silence and said, “We shall reside at the place where you direct us to live. Indicate to us a place where we shall not cause any trouble to anyone and where we shall not come in the way of hermits and hermitages; give us proper advice. We shall put up a ‘thatch’ of leaves at that place and spend some time therein.”

These words from a pure sincere heart moved the sage. He said in reply, “Oh Rama! I am indeed blessed. You are as 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 Maya¹²³. She creates, maintains and destroys (as you ‘will’) worlds beyond 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. You will protect the good and the compassionate. Rama! You are the eternal Witness of the play named ‘The World.’ The Universe is the ‘seen’; you are the Witness. Even the gods fail to gauge your Reality and your Glory. How then can ordinary mortals understand your Mystery?”

¹²³ See *Endnote – No.5 - Maya*

Only those who have received your Grace, namely, Wisdom, can claim to have known something of your Truth and your Majesty. You have taken this human form in order to promote the peace and security of good men and gods. As a consequence, you are conversing and behaving like one of us. Only fools are misled into believing that you are a man among men! We are all puppets who play about as you direct, as you pull the strings. Who are we to direct you to act thus-wise or to stay at a certain place? Rama! Are you planning to delude us, ascetics, by your words? Oh, how wonderful is your play! How realistic is your acting! Don't I know that you are the Director of this cosmic drama? I cannot understand why you are asking me to select a spot where you can stay for sometime in this forest. Which spot can I choose and recommend? For, is there any spot in the whole Universe where you are not already? Answer me this question, and thereafter, I shall point out the place to which you can go and where you can stay." Valmiki said, looking at the charming face of Rama¹²⁴. In the extremity of his delight, words melted away on his tongue.

Rama laughed within himself when he listened to the revered sage. Meanwhile, the sage spoke again, soft and sweet, with a smile beaming on his resplendent face. "Rama! I know in reality you reside in the hearts of your devotees. Now, I shall tell you the best place where this form of yours can stay. Listen. You can

¹²⁴ When.. Rama asked him (*Sage Valmiki*) to indicate a place where he can reside. Valmiki said, "We sages reside in You; you reside in us. Where else can I request you to reside? Though you have assumed this human form, You give yourself away by the Beauty that shines in You." (*SSS Vol.13 p.57-58*)

reside there with Sita and Lakshmana. Select those whose *ears*, like the ocean, receive gladly the streams of stories recounting your exploits, and are ever happy, listening to the narrative of your divine acts and words, whose *tongues* are busy repeating your name and tasting its nectarine sweetness, whose *throats* recite and revel in the recitation of your praise and of your words which are soft and refreshingly sweet, whose *eyes* yearn to see your cloud-blue form as the Chataka bird yearns for the first cloudburst, whose ever-present longing is to discover you anywhere, in any quarter, and delight in the discovery when you find any such. Oh! Rama, dwell there, with Sita and Lakshmana.

“Rama! If you wish that I elaborate further listen: Stay in the *heart* of the person who discards evil in others and loves them for the good they have, who trudges along the journey of life in the path of morality and integrity, who observes approved limits of conduct and behaviour, and who has the faith in thought, word and deed, that the Universe is your creation and that the entire objective world is your body. “Nevertheless, since you have assumed now this human body and come here in order to carry out the commands of your mother and father, and questioned me in that role, I am venturing to answer, as if that role is real. You can reside on the Chitrakoota Hill. It has all facilities for comfortable stay. It is a holy place and a charming beauty spot. The atmosphere is saturated with love and peace. Lions and elephants roam together there, with no trace of rivalry.

The river Mandakini, extolled in the Vedas, flows round the hill. Sages like Athri live there in hermitages, which you can visit and render more sacred. Confer your blessing on that sublime spot

and on that dear divine river.” As soon as Valmiki gave this direction, Rama agreed and receiving his permission to leave, he resumed his journey with Sita and Lakshmana. (*RKR V Part I p.369-374*)

EXILE FOR SITA

That moment, the sage Valmiki was passing through the forest on his way to his hermitage from the Ganga where he had gone for his ritual bath. Her words fell on his ears. He was surprised that a woman’s voice was calling out for help from the recesses of the forest. He followed the voice to its source, searching all round, and at last, came to her very presence. She recognised him as the sage Valmiki and related to him all that had happened to her. “Oh Monarch of Monks,” she appealed, “I am daughter of Emperor Janaka. I am the wife of Sri Ramachandra. The whole world knows this. I do not know why he has deserted me and cast me away. Can the dictates of destiny be escaped from? Great among Sages! Lakshmana brought me here and left. He did not tell me why he had to do so.”

Valmiki listened to her tale of woe. He consoled her and comforted her; “Oh Daughter! Your father, the Emperor of Mithila, Janaka, is my friend, my disciple. He has reverence and faith in me. Dear one, do not worry at all. Feel that my hermitage is your paternal home. All will be well with you. You will certainly re-join Rama. You will achieve that desire.” Taking Sita to be his own daughter, he directed her to have a bath in the Ganga and return. After the cleansing bath, she prostrated before Valmiki, and the sage led her to the hermitage, giving her

affectionate assurances. He offered her roots and fruits and pressed her to eat a few. She could not refuse the pleadings of the great elder. Thereafter, Sita spent her days at the hermitage, in constant meditation on Rama and his glory and in sharing peacefully with the pupils and disciples of Valmiki the tasks incidental to the upkeep and maintenance of that spiritual household. The residents of the hermitage as well as Valmiki regaled her with interesting and wondrous stories and entertained her with humorous anecdotes and incidents. (*RKRV Part II p.311-312*)

COMPOSING THE RAMAYANA

The author of the Ramayana is called Prachetas. How did he acquire this name? Prachetas is the name of the Rain-God Varuna. Ratnakara was the original name of the poet. After he was initiated, he began meditating on the Lord's name and completely lost all body consciousness. An anthill grew over his body. His body was not visible from outside. At this stage Varuna caused a heavy downpour. That heavy rain washed away the anthill, revealing the sage. Because Prachetas was responsible for bringing forth the sage, he got the name Prachetas (the offspring of Prachetas). He also got the appellation Valmiki because he had come out of "*Valmeeka*," an anthill.

Prachetas became the sacred and immortal composer of the epic Ramayana, which he gave to the world as a perennial source of inspiration to mankind. Any person today who can get rid from the mind, attachment and possessiveness enveloping him and

who constantly meditates on God will become pure and sacred, like Valmiki. (*SSS Vol.29 p.71-72*)

The story of the first shloka of Ramayana

Take the example of the parrots. Conjugal fidelity is supreme quality among parrots. The firm attachment to each other in a parrot couple is not to be found even among highly developed human beings¹²⁵. The story of how Valmiki was deeply moved when a hunter killed one of two birds who were a loving couple is well known.

When one of the birds died, its mate followed suit¹²⁶, unable to bear the pangs of separation. Out of the intense sorrow and compassion of Valmiki, the first *shloka* emerged from his lips and that was the beginning of the great epic. (*SSS Vol.30 p.28-29*)

¹²⁵ Thus, the birds and animals also love each other. How then can a human being lose such a noble quality of love? Today there are many things that a human being can learn from birds, animals and even beasts. But, the human being is least bothered to learn these lessons. I have been teaching many good things since decades, but you don't listen. Even if you listen, you don't put them into practice. If somebody abuses you, you feel sad. Don't you know that he also feels in the same way when you abuse him? Praise or criticism, treat them all as part of the divine *leela*. When you develop such a sense of equanimity, you will come up in life. (*SSS Vol.41 p.139*)

¹²⁶ When its mate dies, a bird will not seek another partner. It will starve itself to death. How many men care to follow the example of the birds in their devotion to monogamy? Many are ready to remarry after the loss of the first wife. The supreme virtue of monogamy is a quality man can learn from birds. Thus, there are many useful lessons to be learnt from animals, birds and insects. Book knowledge alone is of little use. (*SSS Vol.30 p.29*)

The sage Valmiki, who was pure, holy and utterly selfless, wrote the Ramayana in hundred crores (a thousand billion) of stanzas for the redemption of mankind. But the *Devas and Rishis*, realising the supreme greatness of the Ramayana, sought from Valmiki a share in his great work. Responding to their appeal, Valmiki distributed the *shlokas* (verses) among the denizens of the three worlds. (*SSS Vol.27 p.108*)

When the stanzas were thus divided and distributed, one stanza of 32 syllables alone remained. After 30 syllables were equally divided, only two syllables remained undistributed. (*SSS Vol.25 p.66*)

These two syllables were the letters RAA-MA, which he gave to the dwellers of the three worlds. The same two syllables are found in the names¹²⁷ of Krishna, Hari, Jesus, Allah and Saayee. Thus Valmiki offered to the residents of all the three worlds the two-syllable name of the Lord equally. (*SSS Vol.27 p.109*)

Brahma's benediction

When Valmiki completed his *Ramayana*, Brahma¹²⁸ declared that his epic would last as long as the mountains stand and the

¹²⁷ These names can be recited by people of any country or faith. They are not confined exclusively to any faith or country. Any person with a pure and loving heart can recite any of these names. No blame will attach to him. (*SSS Vol.25 p.66*)

¹²⁸ On one occasion Brahma came to Valmiki and told him that the gift of Saraswati was given to him and that he should write the *Ramayana*. When we say that Brahma came to Valmiki and handed over Saraswati to him as a gift, we find it difficult to understand the statement because we regard Saraswati as the wife of Brahma. Because of the word *Pati* we

rivers flow. The inner meaning of Brahma's benediction is that the *Ramayana* will be cherished as long as men (mountains) and women (rivers) exist on earth. The *Ramayana* will last as long as human society exists. People should acquire the capacity to comprehend the eternal truths embedded in the *Ramayana*. Ignoring the eternal truths of the *Ramayana*, *Bharatiyas* (Indians) are wasting their lives in the pursuit of worldly concerns. (*SSS Vol.31 p.72*)

The great qualities of Rama are countless

It is impossible to describe the greatness of the life of Rama. The great qualities of Rama are countless. Valmiki wrote his *Ramayana* while Rama was still reigning over the kingdom.

take Brahma as the husband of Saraswati. That is not correct. *Pati* really means *Karta* or the head of a situation. When we say that Brahma is the head or controller of all *Manthras*, we should not readily interpret Brahma as the husband of Saraswati. Brahma is to be regarded as the master of *Manthras*. Brahma is really the controller or the master of the *Manthras*, and to misinterpret by saying that he has a wife and a family is not correct. Brahma, the master, does not have any such relationship and such an interpretation is erroneous. Here, we should understand the meaning of Saraswati and what she stands for. Saraswati has for her vehicle the *Hamsa* (Swan). This word *Hamsa* stands for *Soham* or the taking in and giving out of the breath. Thus, what Brahma has handed over to Valmiki as a gift is the aspect of *Soham*. You cannot get a word out without taking in a proper breath. Here breath is the carrier *Hamsa*, or the Swan, and who rides over it is Saraswati. This means that Brahma has given to Valmiki the aspect of *Soham* or the breath which brings out the words, and he asked him to use this in writing the *Ramayana*. By the title *Brahmanaspati*, we have to understand that Brahma is the master and that he is in full control of the mantras. (*Brahmana* is a word which comes from *Brhaman*, Brahma rides over these mantras or the mantra carry Brahma and therefore also, he has been called *Brahmanaspathi*. (*SSB 1974 p.47-48*)

In the Ramayana, the pearl oyster called intellect waiting for the rain drop of Saraswati (Goddess) in the ocean of human heart has been portrayed beautifully. It is only those who take a dip in the lake of Rama's story and thus become sanctified, that are eligible for the grace of Goddess Saraswati. Right from the time of birth of Rama till the killing of Ravana, Sri Rama has been portrayed as an ideal being in the story of Ramayana by Sage Valmiki. There is no trace of exaggeration or falsehood or fantasy in the Ramayana. The reason being, Sage Valmiki before composing Ramayana took a vow that he would write only the truth and would give no scope for untruth or fantasy to figure anywhere in the sacred epic of Ramayana. He knew that Rama was God, verily. Yet, he portrayed the character of Rama as an ideal human being, so that humans may emulate His example and lead a life of truth and morality (*Beacon of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.93*)

Rama was ruling over Ayodhya¹²⁹ at that time. (*SSS Vol.30 p.94*)

PROPAGATION OF THE STORY OF RAMA

Valmiki, after completing the task of composing of the *Ramayana*, summoned the sages in his ashram and asked them

¹²⁹ What does Ayodhya signify? It symbolises the place which cannot be penetrated by evil forces and which is invincible. That place is the heart. That is the place where Rama resides. What is needed today is to make every human heart an Ayodhya. It should be free from any kind of pollution. It should be pure and firm. Then there will be room in it for the story of Rama to enter. (*SSS Vol.30 p.92*)

who was capable of propagating the immortal and sacred epic to every nook and corner of the world. The sages were nonplussed. They declared, "*Guruji*, we are old men. We are at the end of our span of life. We are incapable of conveying the *Ramayana* to the length and breadth of the world." Valmiki was downcast. (*SSS Vol.31 p.73*)

Valmiki was considering how to make it known to the world and how to sanctify the lives of people by spreading its message. The *Ramayana* evokes joy in the listeners by the very sweetness of its poetry. Its *shlokas* (verses) relieve people of their sorrow. (*SSS Vol.30 p.92*)

The two boys Lava and Kusha came before him. When questioned by them as to what he was contemplating on, Valmiki said that he wanted the story of *Ramayana* which he had composed in poem be taught to the people and the Divine Glory of Rama should be spread far and wide. The boys with folded hands submitted to the sage who was also their preceptor, "We are ready to even sacrifice our life for your *Seva*. Command us and we shall follow." Valmiki was moved to tears at the spirit of service exhibited by the young boys. (*SSS Vol.30 p.103*)

Spread the message of Divinity

God resides in the heart of persons. He is essentially *Hridhayanivasi* (Indweller of the heart). Valmiki told the boys - "Go and spread the message of *Ramayana* with the spirit of selfless sacrifice for the welfare of the world." The boys wore garlands

of beads, smeared *vibhuti*¹³⁰ on their foreheads¹³¹, and holding musical instruments in their hands, started on their sacred journey. (*SSS Vol.30 p.149-150*) They went to each and every street singing the glory of Lord Rama. They sang, “Oh people! listen to the sacred story of Lord Rama. Let your life be His Story.” (*SSS Vol.32 Part II p.70*)

It is Valmiki's inspiration that made them pursue this noble task with utmost zeal. Valmiki had taught them the scriptures and moulded their character too¹³². (*SSS Vol.30 p.150*)

Rama story: great ordeals met with fortitude

The two boys¹³³ went along singing and entered Ayodhya. Standing in the heart of the city they went on singing the Ramayana. All the people strolling on the road stopped to listen to the song. They were rooted to their places and were lost in the

¹³⁰ Nowadays youth are reluctant to wear *Vibhuuthi* on their foreheads and participate in *Nagarasankeertan*. They go forward quite willingly and openly for indulging in wicked deeds but feel shy to participate in singing the glory of God. They revel in singing cinema songs of low taste while they fight shy to sing the Divine Names. To spend life in such unholy pursuits is a wasteful exercise and will not bring credit. Morality is the backbone of the community and a society of people bereft of moral values is worse than the jungle infested by wild animals. Even beasts have season and reason while man has lost both. (*SSS Vol.30 p.150*)

¹³¹ *SSS Vol.32 Part II p.70*

¹³² The nectar like contents of an earthen pot is far better than poison kept in a golden jar. The human body is only a mud pot. God exists in this mud pot as *Amrith* (nectar). We do not want a golden vessel with poison. The world is tempting like a golden vessel but is full of poison of worldly pleasures and pains. (*SSS Vol.30 p.150*)

¹³³ See Chapter, *Lava And Kusha*

music of the great epic. This is known as *Bhaava-samaadhi* (the state of blissful feeling). The hearts of the listeners were filled with the bliss of the soulful music. At that moment Rama was coming in his chariot to the spot. He heard the singing. Returning to the palace, he sent word to the two boys to come to his palace for singing their songs. In this manner Lava and Kusha sang the story of Rama in a manner that moved the hearts of one and all—from commoners to King Rama himself. Rama himself enjoyed the narration of his story in song. He posed as if he did not know his own story¹³⁴. (*SSS Vol.30 p.94*)

Outgrow body consciousness in divine feelings

Valmiki prostrated before Rama and confessed- "I have done no penance or spiritual experiences of any kind. By the constant chanting of your name I have been blessed with this beautiful experience. In my youth I had committed many atrocities and incurred many sins out of selfish motives. But, ultimately, chanting your name, I forgot my body altogether. An anthill grew over me. But the name Rama came out of it." That is what everyone should aim at. Outgrow the body consciousness. (*SSS Vol.30 p.101*)

¹³⁴ In this context, the human aspect of Rama should be noted. He lived like a common man, but ordinary men did not live like Rama. That is the secret of this phenomenon. Though Rama was divine, he moved about like an ordinary-man. Common men should live like Rama to manifest their divinity. It is not enough to recognise the human aspects of Rama. People should also realise the divinity in everyone (*SSS Vol.30 p.94*)

INNER PERCEPTIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Sage Valmiki occupied a pride of place in the history of Bharat among those who strove to become great *Thapasvins* (Ascetics) and led an ideal life worthy of emulation by entire humanity. (*Beacon of Divine wisdom Part I p.93*)

Human birth will become meaningful and Human nature will acquire uniqueness

Valmiki, while he was still Ratnakara, put his courage, adventurism and steadfastness in committing evil deeds like highway robberies. But, after coming in contact with the *Saptarishis* (seven great sages) diverted his capacities in chanting the holy *Ramanama*. Ultimately he transformed himself into a great poet and a seer composing the immortal *Ramayana*. Thus, if these God – given powers of courage, fortitude, adventurism and steadfastness are properly channelled in the control of senses, yearning for God and divine path of devotion, human birth will become meaningful. Human nature will acquire uniqueness. (*Bhagavad Gita Part I p.36*)

Man can change his nature from bad to good

Animals live and die without change in their original nature. Man is different. By practice and discipline, man can change his nature--from bad to good or good to bad. All man's thoughts, feelings and actions are determined by habit and perseverance. Even a person who is cruel in early years can turn into a votary of peace and love. Ratnakara, who was a highwayman, became the sage Valmiki.

Through association with good people, through good conduct and good thoughts, one can cultivate virtue and goodness. Above everything, man needs today *Satsangam* (the company of good). For physical health, one needs to get rid of impurities inside the body and take in pure things. Likewise, for mental health, man needs to eliminate all impure thoughts and desires from the mind and acquire good thoughts and good feelings by association with good people. Everyone must send out a prayer: "Oh deities, come and dwell within me! Oh demons, flee from me!" (*SSS Vol.20 p.154-155*)

“Even if you have sinned, are not sinners saved? Repentance is enough to transmute sin into sanctity. The Lord graciously accepts contrition and pours His Blessings. The Ratnakara who was engaged in acts of sin until the moment when wisdom dawned, became a saint through repentance. He became the sage, Valmiki is it not? His story is proof of the value of contrition. You may ask, is it enough if one is free from the effects of sin? Should not the effects of *Punya* (good deeds) be also given up? Why, one *has* the freedom to give up merits of *Punya*, though one may not have equal freedom to give up the demerit of *Paapa* (sin). The roaring forest fire reduces to ashes everything in its way. So too, the mighty conflagration of Jnana will consume and destroy all sin and all *Punya*. (*Geetha Vahini p.103*)

Further, when Valmiki completed composing his *Ramayana* and was looking for people to whom he could communicate this, Lava and Kusa (Rama’s sons) came running to him to learn this and Valmiki taught them all the *Vedas*. If we examine to what sect or class these individuals Lava, Kusa, the Pandavas, Rama, Krishna, etc. belonged, we come to the conclusion that everyone has the right to study and imbibe all that is contained in the *Vedas*. Because everyone has the right to study and put into practice the *Vedas*, the first thing that you have to do is to recognise the existence of such a right. Then you should be in a position to read and also communicate their contents to others. This is what I am hoping you will be able to achieve. (*SSB 1974 p.122*)

Shlokadata and Lokadata

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. (*SS May '99 p.116*) and (*SSS Vol.32 Part 1 p.104*)

The lord is Kavi and Valmiki is also a Kavi; both create, one the loka and the other, the shloka. The bhakta must form himself on the model of Bhagawan; otherwise, he can lay no claim for Sa-rupya. (SSS Vol.4 p.128)

Ratnakara was a highway robber who supported his family by attacking wayfarers and robbing them of their possessions. Such a person was so completely transformed by association with the seven great sages (*Saptarishis--Vashishta* and others) that he later became Valmiki, the great *Adi Kavi*, who wrote the epic "Ramayana". Not only was he the first among poets, but he achieved the same status as the sage Vyasa. The Seven Sages hailed Valmiki as *Shlokadata* (the giver of the shloka), coming after the *Lokadata*, Bhagawan, (the giver of all things). (SSS Vol.19 p.107-108)

Sage Valmiki declared that the Ramayana will be there so long as there are mountains and rivers on the face of the earth. You may wonder, what is the relationship between the Ramayana and the mountains and the rivers? The mountains symbolise men and the rivers women. As long as there are men and women in this world, the glory of Ramayana will continue to illumine the world. Women are compared to rivers because they are the symbols of sacrifice. They flow incessantly quenching the thirst of one and all. (SSS Vol.36 Part I p.113)

Valmiki's transformation

The Kenopanishath has proclaimed this truth beautifully. "*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*" (The knower of the Divine becomes Divine himself). Whatever you aspire for, whatever your yearning, that you become yourself. When Valmiki wished to write the Ramayana, he first meditated on all the qualities of Rama and then alone he could commence his epic. Because of the constant repetition of the name of Rama and continuous meditation on the Rama Principle, he shone with the effulgence of Rama. It is one of the miracles of Rama that the highwayman Ratnakara could become the author of a great epic.

There should be no mark of sadness on the face of one who has faith in God. This was the case with Valmiki. His face was full of radiance---a radiance derived from Rama, who is the embodiment of Love. (SSS Vol.28 p.234)

Meditated on the glory of Rama

Valmiki by meditating on the glory of Rama, was able to mould himself into immortal poet who composed the Ramayana. He became an embodiment of that glory, and therefore, he could create that great epic. (*SSS Vol.17 p.47*)

The knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* Himself. Valmiki, who wrote the Ramayana, was so much immersed in the Rama principle that the inmates of his *ashram* noticed an effulgence in his face reflective of the splendour of Rama Himself. The face is a reflection of the inner being. Whatever thoughts and emotions fill a man, they are reflected, in his face. (*SSS Vol.19 p.15*)

Rama is the embodiment of Veda - Valmiki saw Divine Rama as an Ordinary human being

In this phenomenal world, all forms manifest peace.

All names are auspicious.

Sat-Chit-Ananda express the One Absolute.

Its attributes are: Truth, Beauty, Goodness.

The Supreme, that is to be

Comprehended through the Vedas,

Took birth as the son of Dasaratha,

Became the soul of Ramayana of Valmiki

(Sanskrit verses).

Valmiki proclaimed in the Ramayana that the supreme Lord took birth as the son of Dasaratha and shone as the embodiment of the Veda. Nevertheless Valmiki described the saga of Rama as that of an ordinary human being. Valmiki saw Divine in Rama as an Ordinary human being. Ravana saw Rama entirely as a mere man. (*SSS Vol.30 p.90-91*)

Valmiki, at the beginning of the Ramayana was swayed by the idea that Rama was the ideal man. But during the course of his writing, he was over-powered by the feeling that Rama was Divinity itself and concluded, at the end of the Epic, that Rama was the Embodiment of Divinity. On the other hand, Tulsidas began his Ramayana with the firm faith that Rama was verily Lord Narayana Himself and concluded emphasising the fact the Rama was the ideal man. Kamban, the author of Kamba Ramayana, wrote his Ramayana moved by the

feeling that man is God and God is man (Nara is Narayana and Narayana is Nara). The three great writers of the Ramayana lent different dimensions to it, depending on their inner perceptions. Each writer, who brought forth his version of the Ramayana, added his own dimension in consonance with his own faith and temperament. By and large, it is a fact that the Rama Thathwa (Rama's Principle) has to be cultivated by one and all. (SSB 1996 p.12)

Valmiki Compares Rama and Ravana

When Valmiki was asked by Lava and Kusa why he described Ravana as *murkha* (a senseless man), although he was the master of all the *Vedas* and *Sastras*, while describing Rama as a high-souled person, he said: "Ravana was a well-versed scholar, but did not practise what he knew. Rama was a *Jnani* (a wise one) who lived up to what he had learnt. By controlling His senses, Rama led a life of truth and righteousness." Education that is used only for selfish ends is no education at all. Education should be used for promoting the welfare of others. Ravana sought only his own pleasure. Rama dedicated His life for the welfare of all. (SSS Vol.22 p.22-23)

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. (SSS Vol.22 p.77)

Here is an illustration. Ravana was a greater scholar than Rama. He was a master of sixty-four categories of knowledge. He knew also knowledge about the training of cows and elephants. Despite all these accomplishments, Ravana was described by Valmiki as a *murkha* (a stubborn fool). Rama was described as *Dharmamurti* (the very image of righteousness). Despite all his knowledge, Ravana failed to keep his senses under control. Because he let his senses have free play, he became a fool. Anyone who misuses his senses is a fool, whatever the extent of his knowledge. Rama had full control of his senses and maintained perfect equipoise in all circumstances, whether of joy or grief. When he had to leave for the forest at the very moment that had been fixed for his coronation, he left for the forest with serene equanimity. He was unaffected by gains or losses, pleasure or pain. Life is a mixture of happiness and misery. Students! Your first task is to cultivate control over the senses.

Only the student who has mastery over the senses can be heroic in his life and be strong and effulgent as a diamond. The one who is a slave of the senses will be a slave of the world. Self-control must be the primary aim of education. (*SSS Vol.25 p.142-143*)

Rama is the very image of *Dharma*

Ravana was one who was endowed with all wealth and prosperity. He lacked nothing in terms of comforts and luxuries. He had mastered the 64 categories of knowledge. His capital, Lanka, rivalled *Swarga* (heaven) itself in its grandeur. Instead of showing regard for Ravana, 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*. Everyone 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* (*Ramo Vighrahavaan Dharma*). (*SSS Vol.24 p.205*)

Good Thoughts, Feelings And Good Conduct Constitute Good Character

At one time, Valmiki prayed to Narada and asked him whether there was anyone who upheld truth, enjoyed bliss, was ever smiling and forgiving, who did not commit any mistake, expressed gratitude for any small help, who always helped others, etc., and enumerated 11 noble qualities. Narada replied thus: “Oh! Sage, why do you take so much trouble? Not just eleven, but 11000 noble qualities are in a single person who has taken birth in this world.” There is no one who attaches value to character now. The three essential things that constitute character are good thoughts, good feelings and good conduct. If you have good thoughts, your actions will automatically be good. Good qualities are the very personification of Divinity. A person with such divine qualities only took birth in human form as Lord Rama. Lord Rama faced many problems and difficulties, but he never strayed away from His path. He never gave up Truth; rather, whatever He spoke became Truth. This was the sacred path taught by Narada. (*SSS Vol.34 p.236*)

Equal-mindedness of Valmiki

Even in Ravana, who is generally taken to be a bad person, Valmiki has shown certain good qualities. In some places good qualities of Vali also were described by Valmiki.

As has been stated earlier, great saints are equal minded. Because of the saintly character of Valmiki, he showed the weaknesses in Rama and he showed the good qualities in Ravana. He was a selfless person. He was called *Maharishi*, because he could see the past, present and future. It is only a great saint or a *maharishi* that is entitled to write poetry. Poets like Valmiki and Vyasa were *maharishis*. Because of this, whatever they had written has come to be regarded as permanent and truth and it remained so for all time. (**SSB 1977 p.9**)

Throughout the story of the entire *Ramayana*, from the time of the birth of Rama till the time when Ravana was destroyed, Valmiki was describing Rama only as an ideal human form. (**SSB 1977 p.17**)

Meaning of Rama as given by Valmiki

Sage Valmiki has stated in his *Ramayana* that uttering the name of Rama will enable us to free ourselves from the three shackles which lead one to be reborn. He has also 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 the moon. The 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 Rama removes your sins, your ignorance, your agitation and eliminates the possibility of your getting a rebirth. In this context, he has also identified the sound of *Aum* with the name Rama since both bring the same result. As *Aum* is the very basis of all the *Vedas*, so also Rama is the basis of all the creation. The three important aspects of *Agni*, *Vayu* and Sun contained in the name Rama are synonymous with *Ida*, *Saraswati* and *Bharathi* and are the basis for the whole world. Although *Ida*, *Saraswati* and *Bharathi* are apparently different and described as distinct, yet they are inseparably connected to each other. Just as *Aum*, the sound of *Pranava*, is a total manifestation of three different and distinct letters and their aspects, the word

Brihaspati or Prajapati is a total manifestation of all the three aspects of Ida, Saraswati and Bharathi. This aspect of Brihaspati is also known as *Vachaspati* or the word of *Veda* and the same thing has been referred to as Brahmana or a *Rithwik* well-versed in *Manthras*. Bharatha is a *Vedic* word and has nothing to do with Bharatha, the son of Shakuntala. There is a saying that one derives pleasure from the thought of God is Bharatha and the name Bharatha has a connection with this.

It has been mentioned earlier that *Hamsa* or the Swan is the vehicle for Saraswati. *Hamsa* is synonymous with the sound “*Soham*” which stands for in haling and exhaling breath. By uttering *Soham*, the word is created and Saraswati represents the word. That is why we say that Saraswati rides over the swan. This is the inner meaning. In our *Puranas*, different Gods have been described as riding over different kinds of animals making it look absurd. These are symbolic descriptions, all of which have sacred and significant inner meaning. But, the modern people fail to appreciate our culture, due to their ignorance of these inner meanings. (*SSB 1974 p.243-244*)

Spirit of sacrifice is found-only in women

Valmiki extolled the sweetness of womanhood. What is the cause of, this sweetness? The spirit of sacrifice is the cause, according to Valmiki.

A mother is ready to sacrifice everything even her life, for the sake of her child. Such a spirit is to be found only among women. If a child is grievously ill, the father may say that the child may as well die. But the mother will try to save the child at any cost. It is for this reason, that woman is described as *Thyaga murti*, the embodiment of sacrifice. Men do not have the same spirit of sacrifice as women. Men may present a heroic pose, but do not have the determination and perseverance to carry on the struggle to the end. Valmiki described woman as the *Bhakti swaroopini* (embodiment of devotion). Man was described as *Jnana swarupa*. The *Jnani* has limited access to the Divine mansion. But the woman devotee has access to innermost apartments. The preeminent status accorded to women will be evident from all the ancient scriptures. (*SSS Vol.28 p.325-326*)

The sages of India desired to establish peace on earth

Vyasa and Valmiki underwent a long process of asceticism and study, as well as experience 'of spiritual bliss and thus lifted themselves upto the heights of *rishihood*, before they composed the epics and texts bearing their name. The question may be asked, "Why should they compose poetry, however exalted, after attaining *rishihood*? What was the urge that prompted them?" The answer is: "They were overcome with compassion, for the fellow-pilgrims struggling along the path they had-traversed; they were full of agony at the plight of fellow-beings who were sweltering in the heat of worldly entanglements." They desired to establish peace on earth and good-will among mankind. Their attention was ever on the *Vedic* message, "*Swayam theernah, paraan thaarayathi.*" "Themselves having crossed the Sea of *Samsara* (change), they help others to do likewise." Themselves risen to the Divine, they helped others to rise. (*SSS Vol.8 p.123*)

Vyasa and Valmiki have both painted on the golden canvas of their poetry the eternal values of *Dharma*. Vyasa has drawn the picture of the Pandava brothers, hunted, tortured, persecuted, exiled, impoverished, humiliated, but, yet unbroken, because they relied on righteousness, emerging triumphantly at the end, through the Grace of God which is the reward. Valmiki too has depicted Rama bearing with perfect equanimity the different phases of fortune, carrying the torch of *Dharma* with its flame unquenched even in the wildest storm. *Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah*---"Be right, righteousness will save you"---this is the refrain of the Mahabharata of Vyasa and the Ramayana of Valmiki. Practise it loyally; it will save you, sustain you, strengthen you. (*SSS Vol.7 p.273*)

The Divine and the human

Every man is endowed with a mind. The mind is a mysterious thing. It can appear totally stationary and yet move faster than the speed of light. Whatever births a person may undergo and whatever changes in name and form may occur, the mind remains unchanged. It follows one from birth to birth. It is the mind's peculiar behaviour. In this context, how is one to manifest his humanness? Man must follow the example of the honey bee which sucks the sweet honey even from a bitter flower. Likewise one must seek the good even in what is apparently bad. There is something good in what is bad.

Valmiki declared that he saw the divine in the human form of Rama. Rama, who was Divinity itself, was seen as a human being. "Madhava is human. Man is Madhava." God cannot be experienced unless He appears in human form. Incarnation as a human being is essential for recognizing God. That is why it is said that "*Daivam manushya rupena*" (God appears in human form).

Rama did not announce at any time that he was God. He declared that he was the son of Dasaratha. In his speech, though there was humanness, there was also the illumination of Divinity. God is not apart from the universe. The entire cosmos is the very form of God. But man, deluded by his physical vesture, forgets his divinity. (*SSS Vol.29 p.73*)

The Lord is devoid of attachment or hatred. He comes on a Mission and is bent only on that task. It is His nature to support the right and admonish the wrong. His task is to restore vision to man, to turn his footsteps along the path of morality and self-control, so that he may achieve Self-knowledge.

- ***Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba***

11.10 VASHISTHA

VASHISTHA

Vashishta in Hindu mythology is one of the Saptarishis (Seven Great Sages Rishi) in the seventh, i.e the present Manvantara, and the Rajpurohit / Rajguru of the Suryavansha or Solar Dynasty. He was the mānasaputra ("mind son") of Brahma. He had in his possession the divine cow Kamadhenu and Nandini her child, who could grant anything to their owners.

Vashishta one of 9 Prajapatis is credited as the chief author of Mandala 7 of the Rig-Veda. Vashishta and his family are glorified in RV 7.33, extolling their role in the Battle of the Ten Kings, making him the only mortal besides Bhava to have a Rig-Vedic hymn dedicated to him.

Another treatise attributed by him is "Vashishta Samhita." Vashishta was the Sadguru of his time, possessing 20 "kalas" (divine arts) and had complete knowledge of the whole cosmos and the god. Many of his Shlokas are found in Vedas as well.

In the Ramayana Vashishta appears as the court sage of king Dasaratha. Sage Vashishta was Ram's guru and the Rajpurohit of Ikshvaku dynasty. He was a peace-loving, selfless, intelligent and great Rishi. He had established a Gurukul (residential

college) on the banks of the river Beas, where he and his wife Arundathi were taking care of thousands of students.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

VASHISHTA:

Vashishta¹³⁵: One of the greatest rishis (sages) of ancient times; priest of the solar race of kings; revealer of several Vedic hymns. Had sacred, wish fulfilling cow called Nandini. (*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

Agastya and Vashishta were both children of Mitra Varuna and both were born from the same pot. (*SSS Vol. IV p.29*) Was born of a public woman (*Jnana Vahini p.30*)

Vashishta: Dasaratha's resident preceptor¹³⁶. (*SSB 2000 p.214*)

Vashishta was one of the seven great sages, Saptarishis. (SSS Vol. 19 p.108)

¹³⁵ Also spelt as Vasishta, Vashista

¹³⁶ Vashishta said, "O Dasaratha, do you know why I am serving as a priest in your royal household? I am not here because I am enamoured by your wealth, fame, and power. I knew that God was going to take birth here in human form. I wanted to sanctify my life by having the *darshan* of that divine boy, spending time with Him, and experiencing bliss. That is the reason why I am here, and not for any worldly gains. Why do you entertain doubts about Rama? Send Him immediately with Sage Viswamitra to the forest." With great reluctance, Dasaratha yielded to Vashishta's command. (*SSB 2000 p.214-215*)

Sage Vashishta, the Preceptor and Counsellor of Emperor Dasaratha¹³⁷, initiated Rama into the mystic formula, *called Aadhithyahridhaya*, the 'Heart of the Sun,' directing him to recite it whenever victory appeared to slip out his grasp! (*SSS Vol.7 p.143*)

Sage Vashishta taught the nature of Karma and Brahman to several kings. He taught philosophy and epics as well as the secret of divine incarnations to them. Not only that; he authored a *Smrithi* (sacred text containing moral codes) too, which contains thirty chapters. It is named “*The Vashishta Dharma Sutra.*”

Thus, the sage Vashishta earned a great name and fame for himself as a noble soul who had the good fortune of constant darshan, Sparshan and Sambhaashan of God Himself and thus sanctified his life. He was an erudite scholar in all branches of knowledge. He was a divine Rishi. He knew that Sri Rama was an incarnation of Lord Narayana, verily. (*Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.97*)

Vashishta-smrithi¹³⁸: Law book written by Vashishta. (*Glossary for the Vahinis*)

Sage Vashishta was a triloka Jnani (one who knows all that happens in the three worlds). (*Bhagavad Gita Part I p.156*)

¹³⁷ Dasaratha said, “For the Ikshvaku Dynasty, the sage Vashishta is God on Earth! He is our supreme preceptor. He can speak with full authority on the traditions of our dynasty.” (*RKRV Part 1 p.178*)

¹³⁸ Also spelt as Vashishta-smrithi

Viswamitra and Vashishta were not ordinary people. They were great saints. They were people with great courage and strength. In fact, they had acquired proficiency in all the different aspects of learning and wisdom. (*SSB 1977 p. 4*)

The Emperor had two eminent priests (*purohits*), Vashishta¹³⁹ and Vamana. These priests led profoundly moral and spiritual lives, and were always absorbed in Divine contemplation. (*SSB 1996 p.12*)

Sage Vashishta occupied the pride of place among Brahmas. He was the foremost among the seven great Rishis. He was the Royal Guru (Preceptor) to the Ikshvaku lineage. Creator Brahma once felt that there is a gradual decline of the noble lineage in the world and consequently decline in dharma as also a total absence of noble qualities like love, compassion and tolerance. As a result, he felt that there is a possibility of the demons proliferating the entire world. He therefore resolved that the noble lineages shall be revived with the help of great sages. As part of His divine plan Brahma prompted Sage Vashishta to marry Arundathi, a noble and pious lady. Vashishta obeyed His command and married Arundathi. They built an *Ashram* (Hermitage) and led a simple but ideal family life, constantly contemplating on *Atma Thathwa*. There is not even a trace of

¹³⁹ Ancient sages like Vashishta worked very hard in order to sanctify their lives. Why did Vashishta join the court of Dasaratha? One day Vashishta himself explained this to Dasaratha in the following words: “O king, I have come to you not because you are wealthy and powerful but because Lord Narayana Himself will be born as your son. I want to sanctify my life in His company.” Vashishta always used to think of divinity. So, he had the appellation *Brahmarishi*. (*SSS Vol.31 p.316-317*)

kama (desire), *Krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (pride) and *matsarya* (envy) in Sage Vashishta. They were strictly following the rules and austerities of Ashram life laid down in scriptures. (*Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.96*)

HIS CONSORT:

The sage's consort, the famed Arundathi ¹⁴⁰ (*was the*) embodiment of all the virtues which adorn the noblest of women. (*RKR Part 1 p.14*)

VASHISHTA'S LINEAGE:

Sage Vyasa was the great-grandson of the sage Vashishta ¹⁴¹. (*SSS Vol.2 p.70*)

¹⁴⁰ Elaborate rituals were prescribed so that this inner yearning and outward purity may be firmly established. In the constellation called *Sapta-rishi-mandala* (the Great Bear), the star Vashishta, has very near it, a faint little star called Arundathi. Vashishta and Arundathi are the ideal couple. The two are inseparable even in the sky, always at the same degree of proximity. Therefore, the newly married pray to them for blessing them with long years of happy companionship. The star Arundathi is pointed out to the bride by the groom as the model of constancy. In order that they may identify it, they have first to note the *Mandala* (region), then the Vashishta star and then fix their eyes on the Arundathi star. The concrete is a pointer to the abstract; the gross leads one on to the subtle; the ritual guides one to the right: the sacrifice or *Yajna* reveals the indweller. (*SSS Vol.6 p.90*)

¹⁴¹ This day (*Guru Poornima*) is a day when mankind pays homage to the greatest of spiritual doctors, Sage Vyasa. Vyasa is the greatest of such doctor; for he put together the *Vedas* and composed the *Puranas* and the Mahabharata and gave humanity the Bhagavatha. He is the primal *Guru* for all who walk in the Path of God. He planted the seed of theism and nurtured it, through *Sruthi*, *Smrithi*, *Sastras* and the Mahabharata. He gave the world the Geetha and the *Brahma Sutras*, the idea of the immanent *Atma*, the story of the Divine *Leela*, the secret of this changeful Creation. He belonged to about 3800 B.C.; he was the great-

IKSHVAKU LINEAGE:

Maharaja Dileepa's family preceptor, Sage Vashishta:

Maharaja Dileepa¹⁴² was apparently overcome with some mysterious anxiety. One day he revealed to his queen Sudakshina the cause of his gloom that they had no children and as a consequence that Ikshvaku dynasty would terminate with him and some sin which he committed must have brought about this calamity. They hastened to consult revered Vashishta.

Vashishta showered his blessings on the Ruler of the Empire and inquired about his health and the welfare of his subjects and his kith and kin.

Sudakshina fell at the feet of the sage's consort, Arundathi. Arundathi lifted her into her arms and fondly embraced her, prodding her with questions about her welfare. She led her into the inner part of the hermitage.

Dileepa enquired from Vashishta whether the Yajnas and Yagas (sacrifices), the ascetics had to perform as parts of the cultural tradition were being carried out without any handicap. Whether

grandson of the sage Vashishta, the son of Parasara and the father of that celebrated gem among *rishis*, Suka. His life-story is a series of miracles, a Divine saga. He came from Vasudeva, announced the *Leela* of Vasudeva to all and finally, got merged in Vasudeva. He established the era of *Naamapaaraayana* (repeating and discoursing, on Lord's Name) and made all aware of the sweetness of the Name of the Lord, which evokes His Form and His Grace. (SSS Vol.2 p.70)

¹⁴² See Chapter, *The imperial line* - **KHATVANGA TO DILEEPA - Cause of being Childless**

the anchorites (*somebody who lives a reclusive life of prayer*) were experiencing any difficulty in acquiring food and carrying on their studies and spiritual practices and whether the sylvan campuses were terrorised by wild beasts. He was yearning, he said, to make their studies and spiritual exercises progress well without any distraction due to adverse environment or counter influences.

Vashishta suggested to the assembled sages and seekers to move into their hermitages, and asked king the reason for his coming to his place accompanied by the queen and none else. The king communicated to his preceptor the nature and depth of his grief, and prayed for the only remedy that could remove it namely, his Grace.

Listening to that prayer, Vashishta was lost in deep meditation. Perfect silence prevailed. The king too sat in the lotus posture on the bare floor and merged his mind in God. The queen attuned her mind with the Divine.

Kamadhenu cursed you that day that you should have no son to succeed to your throne. She declared, however, that when you take advice of the Guru and start in humility and reverence to serve the cow and worship her in gratitude, the curse will be rendered in fructuous and you will be rewarded with a son and heir.

Therefore, worship the cow from this moment, with your queen, as laid down in the sacred texts and you are certain to have a son.

Vashishta then initiated the King and Queen in the ritualistic vow of “Cow Worship” – *Dhenuvratha*. (*RKR V Part I p.13-17*)

THE SONS

Vashishta suggests that Dasaratha perform the Puthrakameshti Yaga to beget progeny:

One evening, the four (King Dasaratha and his queens) sat in a room of the palace spending hours of anxiety over the future of Ayodhya, and the prospects of its prosperity and safety; and each attempted to answer intelligently and pleasantly. At last, unable to resolve the problem, they rose, heavily dejected and decided that they should consult the family Preceptor, Vashishta, and accept his advice. At break of dawn, Vashishta was respectfully invited to grant his Presence. Many Pundits and Counsellors were also called for consultation. The King placed before them the problem of finding a successor to rule the vast realm between the two seas, the imperial domain under the sway of the Raghu dynasty. Overcome by despair, Dasaratha prayed to the elders in plaintive terms for beneficial suggestions.

Vashishta dwelt long in thought. At last he opened his eyes and spoke thus: “King! You need not grieve thus. Ayodhya will not be rendered master-less. She will not suffer widowhood. This domain will be gay, happy and prosperous, in unbroken festivity and evergreen with festoonery. She will be the guardian of right living, reverberating with music and joy. I will not agree to the raising of a prince from some other dynasty to the throne of Ayodhya. The Grace of God is a gift inscrutable. The Vow of

Righteousness which you are fulfilling will surely bring you the supreme joy of having a son. Do not delay any further! Invite the sage Rshyasrnga, the son of Vibhandaka and perform, with him as the High Priest, the sacred Yaga (Sacrifice) called *Puthrakameshti* (the Yaga prescribed for those desirous of begetting a son). Make all the necessary ceremonial and ritual arrangements for the Yaga forthwith. Your desire will be achieved without fail.” The queens listened to these reassuring words, spoken so emphatically by Vashishta. They were filled with Ananda! The bud of hope bloomed anew in their hearts. They retired into their apartments, praying most earnestly. (*RKR Part 1 p.34-35*)

On the eleventh day of the performance of the *Yajna*, an effulgent being appeared from the fire in the sacrificial altar with a vessel containing a *payasam* (sweet pudding). Dasaratha gave the *payasam* to sage Vashishta and requested him to distribute it equally among the three queens. (*SSS Vol. 41 p.56*)

The Queens partook the Payasam after receiving the blessing of Vashishta:

The Queens finished the Ceremonial Bath (as advised by the Preceptor). They entered the Palace Shrine where the altar of the Family Deity was. Vashishta completed the ceremony of worship. The *payasam* (food) that the Divine Person presented was then placed in three golden cups. Then, Vashishta called Dasaratha in and said, “Raja! Give these cups to your wives—first to Kausalya, next to Sumitra and last, to Kaikeyi.” The King acted as ordered. They laid hold of the cups and fell at the feet of Vashishta and Dasaratha. Then, Vashishta directed that they

should partake of the payasam, only after touching the Feet of Rshyasrnga, who officiated at the Yaga. . (*RKR Part 1 p. 39*)

He blessed the cups saying, “May you beget sons with noble qualities, long life, supreme valour and who are capable of ruling the kingdom in a manner that will please the subjects.” (*SSS Vol. 39 p.233*)

Vashishta’s Joy

When the four children were born, Emperor Dasaratha performed all the rituals connected with the birth of the children. On the second day, Dasaratha asked Sage Vashishta, to bestow his blessings¹⁴³ on the four children. At first, Sage Vashishta remained speechless and could not utter the words of blessing. Recovering, Vashishta said, “How can I utter them when I am spellbound? The mission for which I came to the royal house is fulfilled today.” He added: “I came here as a priest so that I may have the good fortune of associating myself with the Lord, who has chosen to be born in your lineage. I did not come to you tempted by your wealth and stature. The One who has taken birth in your lineage is verily God Himself. But swayed by illusion,

¹⁴³ Sage Vashishta replied “Oh! Dasaratha! How can I utter the words of blessings in my present state when I have lost body consciousness totally on seeing these divine children? The purpose of my stay with you is served completely. I am lost in divine bliss. My long felt desire is fulfilled. I had the darshan of Lord Narayana. My life is sanctified. How do I bless Him? I am not that great as to bless *Paramatma*. There can no greater foolishness than that. In fact, it is a serious mistake to get lost in such ignorance. You do not realise that Lord Narayana Himself is born in your family. You are deluded by ‘*Putra Vathsalya*’ (Fatherly affection for the child).” So saying Sage Vashishta shed tears of joy. (*Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.98*)

you harbour the notion that He is a human child.” Vashishta returned home shedding profuse tears of Bliss, for he realised that his life had attained fulfilment that day. (*SSB 1996 p.20*)

The Naming Ceremony:

Then, Dasaratha prayed to Vashishta to fix the auspicious time for the naming ceremony of the children. The Family Preceptor sat still for a few seconds lost in meditation: he saw revealed in his yogic vision the future years; rousing himself from that vision, he said: “Maharaja! Your sons are not just ordinary mortals. They are incomparable. They have many names. They are not human. They are Divine Beings who have assumed human forms. They are Divine Personalities. The world’s good fortune has brought them here. I consider it a great chance that I could officiate at the naming ceremony of these Divine Children.” The mothers are three, but the father is one and so, Vashishta laid down that the ten-day period of “impurity” be counted from the day when Kausalya delivered her child. So, the eleventh day after the birth of Kausalya’s son, the sage declared, was auspicious for the naming ceremony. The King fell at the feet of Vashishta in thankfulness for this favour and the Preceptor left for his hermitage. (*RKRV Part 1 p. 43*)

The Brahmins started the ceremony, with due attention to detail. They lit the sacred fire and poured oblations with the recitation of appropriate formulae. Rice grains were poured and spread on golden plates: soft silk cloth was spread on the rice. Then, the babies were placed on the cloth by the mothers. The child of Kausalya stared at Vashishta as if he was a 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 Rama, “he who pleases.”

And the sages welcomed the Name as very apt and meaningful. They exclaimed, “Excellent, excellent!” Then, Vashishta gazed upon the twin children of Sumitra, the elder one, he felt, would be a hero, a stalwart fighter, and endowed with vast wealth. He knew that he would take delight in the service of God and His Consort, Lakshmi; that service would be for him like the very breath of life. So, he chose the name Lakshmana for him. His younger brother, Vashishta knew, would be a formidable destroyer of enemies, and withal a contented follower in the footsteps of his elder brothers. He therefore blessed him with the name, Satrugna, (the slayer of enemies).

Later, he gazed on the child that was the source of Kaikeyi’s joy. That child, Vashishta knew, will fill all hearts with love and joy. He will amaze all by his unbelievable adherence to Dharma. He will rule over his subjects with great compassion and affection. So, he gave him the name, Bharatha (he who rules). The people were happy when they heard the Preceptor dilate on the glorious future of the children. They were filled with love for the princes

and called them from that day as Rama, Lakshmana, Satrugna and Bharatha. (*RKRV Part I p. 45-46*)

Vashishta realised the divinity of Rama:

The Queen (*Kausalya*) who had witnessed miraculous incidents¹⁴⁴ with her own eyes remained unconvinced. She was not convinced by his words. Therefore, she approached the Preceptor Vashishta and consulted him on the genuineness of her experiences. He heard her account and said; “Queen! What you have seen is unalloyed Truth. They are not creations of your imagination. Your son is no ordinary human child! He is Divine¹⁴⁵. You got Him as your son, as the fruit of many meritorious lives. That the saviour of Humanity should be born as the son of Kausalya is the unique good fortune of the citizens of Ayodhya.” He blessed the Queen profusely and departed. Kausalya realised the truth of Vashishta statement! She knew that her son was Divinity Itself. She derived great joy watching the child. (*RKRV Part I p.53-54*)

Vashishta reveals the divine secret:

The children of Sumitra puzzled everybody by their incessant crying. Sumitra tried various means to make them stop crying but it was of no avail. Emperor Dasaratha consulted several physicians to cure the strange malady of Sumitra’s children, but nothing worked. (*SSS Vol.33 p.129*)

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter, *Kausalya* - **EXPERIENCES WITH THE DIVINE**

¹⁴⁵ Vashishta knew quite well the Divine Reality of the boys (*RKRV Part I p86*)

Sumitra could not understand the reason for their restlessness. She tried various methods like *mantra*, *tantra* and *yantra*. But, they did not yield any result. They did not stop crying. Finally, she approached her *guru* Sage Vashishta and prayed to him, “Oh! divine *guru*! I am not able to understand why my sons are crying incessantly. Kindly let me know the reason.” Sage Vashishta closed his eyes for sometime and with his *yogic* vision tried to understand the reason for their incessant crying. (*SSS Vol. 39 p. 234-235*)

The eminent sage meditated for some time and said: “Oh mother, you need not administer any medicine to alleviate your children’s suffering. All you have to do is to keep Lakshmana by the side of Rama, and Satrughna in the cradle of Bharatha.” (*SSS Vol.33 p.129*)

Sumitra, after obtaining the permission of Kausalya and Kaikeyi made the two boys lie in the cradle beside Rama and Bharatha, respectively. The very next moment both Lakshmana and Satrughna stopped crying and started to play happily. (*SSS Vol. 39 p.234-235*) The two children who had refused to drink milk till then started taking food and playing in the cradle. Surprised at this sudden change of their behaviour, Sumitra prayed to the sage to explain the cause of this behaviour¹⁴⁶. (*SSS Vol.33 p.129*)

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter, *Sumitra - Sumitra realises the Truth Mamaivamsho jeevaloke jeevabhuta sanathana:*

Then Vashishta¹⁴⁷ explained to her, “O mother, Lakshmana and Satrugna are the *amsas* (parts) of Rama and Bharatha, respectively. So, when they were united, they became blissful.” (*SSS Vol.33 p.129*)

Since then Lakshmana followed Rama like a shadow and Satrugna followed Bharatha. (*SSS Vol.39 p.234-235*)

THE GURU AND THE PUPILS

Vashishta tells Dasaratha that the children have mastered all the arts:

Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna grew up as young men of great valour and learning under the loving care of their parents and *Guru* Vashishta. (*SSS Vol.41 p.58*)

Emperor Dasaratha brought up his children with great love and affection and performed the thread ceremony when they were five years old. The Emperor prayed to Sage Vashishta to initiate the children into the discipline of learning. 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 wellbeing of all people. (*SSB 1996 p.21*)

¹⁴⁷ Sage Vashishta Reveals A Divine Secret. (*SSS Vol. 33 p.129*)

The brothers lived in the preceptor's house and served him with devotion. ... One day Emperor Dasaratha proceeded with his Minister to the home of their teacher. 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 listening only. They are not available anywhere, except from the preceptor! That is the reason why it is referred to as *Sruthi* (That which is heard). It is the Divine breath of God that 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.

The boys prepare to leave the hermitage and Vashishta lets them go with a heavy heart:

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. This gave him unruffled peace.

Dasaratha send the princes around the kingdom and the queens learns about their welfare from Vashishta

*Dasaratha said to Sumantra*¹⁴⁸, ‘Take the princes around the kingdom and let them learn not only the condition of the people but also the holiness of sacred places.’ Accounts of the pilgrimage of the Princes were conveyed to Ayodhya by special courtiers who ran in relays, forward and backward with news they collected. Whenever delays occurred the Queens were weighed down by anxiety. They prayed to the Preceptor, Vashishta, to give them correct information regarding them. Vashishta had the yogic attainment¹⁴⁹ to discover what was happening to them. So, he used to tell them the reassuring news that they were happy, healthy and hearty and that they would soon be returning to the capital. The mothers derived courage and confidence therefrom. The Preceptor blessed them and repaired to his hermitage. (*RKRV Part I p.68*)

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter, *Sumantra - Dasaratha decides to send the children with Sumantra to learn Para Vidya:*

¹⁴⁹ **THE GURU AND THE PUPILS** Vashishta could know the past and the future. (*RKRV Part I p.202-203*)

All are perturbed at the change in the boys and Vashishta's enquiry:

When they learnt that the Preceptor Vashishta was arriving at the Palace, the queens made the preparations necessary, and waited for him at the family altar. Just then, the Guru arrived. All fell at his feet. They showered eager questions on him about the peculiar malady of the boys and the change that had come upon them. They were all in tears. 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. You can retire now to your apartments." The King and Queens were happy at this assurance. They sent for the princes and left. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna quickly got ready to meet the Guru, when the news that he wanted them reached their ears. But Rama evinced no haste. He was immersed in himself, as usual. So, Lakshmana touched his feet and prayed. "It is best we go without delay; or else, our parents will grieve that we dared disobey the command of the Preceptor." Lakshmana pleaded with Rama insistently for a long time, advancing various arguments. Finally, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna 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, unable to explain this inscrutable change. You have to pay heed to their happiness too, isn’t it? 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?”

Yogavashishta:

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? This body is but the image of the Supreme Soul isn’t it? The five elements that comprise the substance called ‘body’ are also the substance of the entire Universe. This Universe is but the concatenation of the five elements isn’t it? The elements persist, in spite of all permutations and combinations. They have also a deeper base. Without realising this, if this created Universe is itself assumed to be real, and if one yields to the fascination of this falsehood, if the truth be discarded for the sake of the lie, what are we to say of such colossal ignorance? What can the individual gain by ignoring the Eternal Absolute Real Reality, the *Atma*?”

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. He bowed his head before him, mentally, for fear of being noticed. He said, “Son! I shall see you again in the evening,” and left the palace, without even meeting Dasaratha. He was so overcome by the illumination of the occasion. He fondled the children with a joyous sense of gratitude and love.

Dasaratha saw the princes after some time. He too saw the strange Glow of Divine Awareness shining in their countenances. He could not understand how it happened and he awaited the arrival of Vashishta in the evening. No sooner did he enter the shrine than the children, the mothers and Dasaratha fell at his feet and sat in their places with palms folded in prayerful humility.

All of a sudden, Rama surprised everyone by asking a series of questions: “The *Jiva*, The *Deva*, the *Prakriti* (Soul, God, Nature) what is the interrelation between these? Are these three, One? Or are they distinct entities? If One, how did it become three and for what purpose? What is the unifying principle underlying these? What benefit is gained by recognising them as different, giving up the cognition of the Unity?” The parents were aghast at the profundity of these questions and the tender age of Rama. They

became fully merged in that stream of instruction and inquiry, that showered precious axioms which shed light on the problems raised, as if Heaven answered the questions raised by Earth!

They forgot that Rama was their own child. The hours of the night rolled by in the analysis and understanding of the great monistic wisdom. 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*¹⁵⁰” a treatise which is meaningful and mellow. It is also referred to as the *Ramagita*. (***RKRV Part I p75-78***)

Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna went to *Guru* Vashishta and started a discussion. The kind of teaching¹⁵¹ which

¹⁵⁰ See *Endnotes* - No. 2 - ***Yoga-Vashishta***

¹⁵¹ A divine sage of the stature of Vashishta could not recognise Divinity sometimes. No doubt, he knew that Sri Rama was the incarnation of Lord Narayana, verily. Yet, he ventured to teach some philosophical truths to him. The compendium of these truths has come to be known as “Vashishta Gita” or “Yoga Vashishta”. One wonders why Sage Vashishta, a person known for such in-depth knowledge of philosophy was overpowered by delusion. Sage Vashishta started with the impression that Sri Rama was an ordinary human and gradually realised the fact that He was in fact, God in human form. The reason for this delusion was Sri Rama donned the vesture of a human being. Divine Will prevails over everything else. In all other cases, ‘man proposes but God disposes’! (***Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.98-99***)

is contained in this exposition of *Atma*¹⁵² is called *Vashishta Gita*. (*SSB 1977 p.50-51*)

ENCOUNTER WITH PARASURAMA

Vashishta, Dasaratha and the four sons were the only persons who were unafraid in that entire huge concourse! All the rest were drained of vigour and vitality—for good reason, too. For the ground and air were enveloped in darkness. The darkness was heightened by blinding flashes of light! And a dreadful figure, with terror-striking eyes, stood before them.

His head had a crown of thickly matted hair. He had a giant double-edged axe on his shoulder. He had on the shoulder a bag of arrows that shone like lightning streaks. He appeared to them like the forehead-eyed Siva on His way to destroy the mighty demon rulers of the Triple Fortress! As soon as he came to view, Vashishta recognised him as Parasurama¹⁵³. But he wondered why he was so fierce with anger that day, even though all his rage against the Kshatriya clans had long ago subsided as a result of the campaigns in which he had destroyed them. He tried to discover what could have kindled the flame again from the cooled embers. Vashishta himself moved towards Parasurama with the traditional signs of welcome, like inviting him to wash his hands and asking permission to wash his feet. But though he accepted these marks of good will and heartfelt reception,

¹⁵² See *Endnotes – No. 3 - Atma*

¹⁵³ See Chapter, *Parasurama*

Parasurama was staring at Rama with eyes like glowing cinders!
(*RKRV Part I p.196-197*)

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CORONATION

Dasaratha, when he desired to crown Ramachandra, consulted the representatives of his people, as well as the Pundits of the court. He placed before the people, not merely his personal wish, but also the reactions of sages like Vashishta to his proposal.
(*SSS Vol.3 p.213*)

Vashishta rose from his seat and said, “Emperor! You need not worry over this in the least. Rama is in every way fit for this great role but we can well afford to wait a little and celebrate it on a grand scale inviting all those whom we wish to be present. I suggest that we wait for a month or two, so that the Coronation of Rama is done as magnificently as we will like to do it.” But, Dasaratha¹⁵⁴ exclaimed, “Mahatma! Nothing is beyond your ken. You are omniscient. When the king loses strength of limb, he does not deserve to hold the reins of high office. It is a bad sign when a king, whom old age has debilitated, entertains the greed to continue on the throne. It indicates avarice in the heart. Knowing all this, if I oppose it, I would have failed in the duty I clearly envisage. Pardon me, do not try to adjourn this ceremony. Grant me permission to appoint Rama as the *Yuvaraja* (heir apparent) within the next two or three days.” Dasaratha pleaded thus, in great humility and with deep reverence. Vashishta lifted

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter, *Dasaratha - The Emperor's Decision*

Dasaratha up and conferred blessings on him. He said, “Oh King! The wedding of Rama too happened on the spur of the moment! It dropped from heaven as Grace. So the people of the kingdom, your subjects, had no chance to share in the joy of that momentous occasion. If the Coronation too is resolved upon and celebrated suddenly, it would pain not only the rulers of many parts of this land, but even more, it will be a source of great sorrow for the brothers, Bharatha and Satrugna. And Janaka, who has become your kinsman and friend, might not be able to attend! I suggest, therefore, that you may well ponder over these considerations before settling the date.”

The chief among the Ministers then rose and said: “May the revered family Preceptor pardon me! The decision of the Emperor has the appreciation and approbation of everyone. Ramachandra is, as the name indicates, as 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. There should not be any delay in crowning him as Yuvaraja, for whatever reason. Please issue necessary orders in this behalf, Oh Emperor! I am praying for this, on behalf of the entire population of this empire.”

When the Emperor and the Chief among the Ministers pleaded like this, Vashishta could not hold onto his attitude any longer. He said that it was necessary to know what the people themselves thought about it. At this Dasaratha stood up and with one sweep of his eye, he looked at the ministers, leading citizens, pundits and priests, as well as others of the vast assembly. The assembly was acclaiming the auspicious proposal in a voice of

thunder. In the midst of that excitement, one citizen, who belonged to a very important group, rose and exclaimed, “Maharaja! The mighty emperors of your line fostered us, the subjects of this empire, as if we were their own children. This Kosala realm attained prosperity and peace through the care and affection of Ikshvaku. Your eldest son Rama is rich in virtue, highly devoted to the ways of righteousness, as heroic as the Chief of Gods, and more than all he has the ability to rule over the three worlds. It is indeed our good fortune that you entertain the idea of crowning him as Yuvaraja.

At this, Dasaratha turned to the Chief Priest. “Oh Greatest among Brahmins you have heard the expression of the wishes of the people. Do not delay any further; collect all the materials and ritual requirements for the Coronation Ceremony,” declared Dasaratha, thrilled with the excitement of anticipation. “Erect the enclosures and the platforms that the scriptures prescribe for the component rites, the sacrificial sites and other sacred structures,” he said.

He fell at the feet of the Family Preceptor, Vashishta, requesting him to supervise the process. “Master! All those who can make it will be present. Let us not delay, awaiting those who have to come from afar. They can derive equal joy when they hear that Rama has been crowned. Do not suggest, as a reason for postponement, the need to invite the Kekaya ruler or Janaka and wait until they arrive. Grant permission to have the holy rite of Coronation performed as early as possible,” he pleaded and prayed with folded hands.

“Maharaja!” Vashishta responded, “I have got all things ready. We can get going as soon as you want. I have directed that the hundred sacred pots, the tiger skin, the covered sacrificial enclosure with its adjuncts, the materials laid down in the scriptures for the rituals of worship, the herbs and flowers, will all be available by dawn tomorrow. Nor is this all. I have intimated the four wings of the armed forces to be in good trim; and also the elephant, Sathrunjaya, the one which has every auspicious mark that the Sastras lay down, to be caparisoned most magnificently. The White Umbrella of Splendour, the Royal Flag of the Imperial Dynasty will also be ready at the Palace. The auspicious moment¹⁵⁵ too has been selected. It will be tomorrow.” When Vashishta announced the good news, the populace was overcome with grateful ecstasy. They leaped in joy. (*RKR V Part I p.216-222*)

This is undoubtedly our fortune.” When the citizen spoke thus, on behalf of all the subjects of the realm, Dasaratha addressed the gathering. (*RKR V Part I p.218*)

The sage Vashishta proceeded with his group of disciples to the Sarayu River for the ceremonial bath, and returned from there, with the Consecrated Water necessary for the Coronation Ablutions. (*RKR V Part I p.263*)

¹⁵⁵ 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. (*SSB 1996 p.37*)

GLOOM OVER AYODHYA

Vashishta holds a conference on the demise of Dasaratha:

Vashishta, the Royal Preceptor, gathered the feudatory rulers, the vassal kings, the ministers, sages and monks, the wise men of the Empire, and leaders among the people, and held a Conference. First he administered words of advice according to the Dharmasastra, the canons of moral law, on the duties and obligations of rulers. He narrated, in the beginning, the entire series of events from the plot woven by Kaikeyi to the day when Rama left for the forest. When Vashishta dilated upon the high qualities of the deceased Emperor—his adherence to Truth, his elevated standards of conduct, his high spiritual attainments, his regal splendour, and his loyalty to Vedic injunctions, which made him a generous patron of countless Yajnas, Yagas and other ceremonial rites. Vashishta then went on with the narration of the attempt made by the Emperor to celebrate the Coronation of Rama and the obstacles that came in his way, which resulted in the exile of Rama and the death of the Emperor himself through grief at the separation from his dearly beloved son. (*RKRV Part I p.407*)

Vashishta persuades Bharatha to perform the last rites of his father:

His grief at the death of his father turned into fury when he heard that it was his father who had commanded Rama to leave Ayodhya. Flushed with anger and fury, he refused to perform the obituary rites to his father and decided to go to the forest to bring Rama back to Ayodhya. But Sage Vashishta pacified him and convinced him that it was his duty to perform the last rites of his

father. Eventually Bharatha performed the last rites to the body, which had been preserved in oil for fifteen days. (*SSB 1996 p.39*)

Vashishta praises Dasaratha saying that he died to redeem his promise:

Vashishta knew what their feelings were. He went near them with comforting counsel. “Son,” he said “there is no use lamenting over the past. What has happened has happened. Now, we must think and resolve upon what has to be done. Your father, I must say, was fortunate in all respects. Why grieve over him? Listen to me. Bow your head to his command. He has granted you the authority to rule over this Empire. It is right that you accept his grant and honour his order. Your father agreed to be separated from Rama, since he could not bring himself to breaking his own plighted word. He gave up his life, since he had immense love and affection towards Rama. He died in order to redeem his promise, there is no doubt about that. He knew that honouring a promise once made is more valuable than life itself. That is why he was ready to face death itself rather than go back on his word. And consider, Rama too went into exile in the forest with his wife in order to honour his word!

Vashishta consoles Bharatha and asks him to look ahead and take on the administrative duties:

“It is the glory of the Ikshvaku royal line that everyone belonging to it would sacrifice anything for the sake of keeping the word once given. That is the splendour which you share. You too must now act according to your father’s word and accept the responsibility of administering the kingdom. May you attain all

auspiciousness in the task. May success and prosperity attend on all your undertakings. I have ventured to advise you thus, only because of the affection and compassion I have towards you; or else, I would not have laid on your shoulder this heavy responsibility. I know you can maintain the fair name of your father. You have the administrative ability, the skill, and the courage needed for taking up this burden. Do not hesitate or doubt. Accept the charge.” Vashishta patted Bharatha¹⁵⁶ on his back and blessed him. (*RKR V Part 1 p. 408-409*)

THE BROTHERS MEET

Rama performs the obsequies of his father:

When the sun rose Vashishta directed Rama to perform the obsequies of the departed father. They were carried out in strict conformity with Sastric injunctions. Since Sri Rama Himself uttered the mantra sanctifying the waters, “May the holy waters of Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Cauvery come into this vessel and sanctify the water therein¹⁵⁷,” the ritual was rendered sacred and eminently fruitful.

Rama urges Vashishta to return to Ayodhya

Thereafter, the Preceptor, the Ministers of the Court, the Queens and the citizens of Ayodhya spent two full days with Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. At the end of the two days, Rama

¹⁵⁶ See Chapter, *Bharatha - GLOOM OVER AYODHYA*
¹⁵⁷ *Gange-cha Yamune-chaiva, Gadavari Saraswati |*
Narmade Sindhu Kaveri, Jale-asmin Sannidhim Kuru

approached the Preceptor, and said, “Master! Those citizens and residents of Ayodhya are suffering very much here, drinking nought else but water and eating nought else but roots and tubers. Looking at Bharatha and Satrughna and also on the Mothers, I feel every moment is as long as an age. It is best to return to the City. You are spending your time here; the Emperor has ascended to heaven. It is not proper that I emphasise the urgency more. Please act, as seems most beneficial.” With these words, Rama fell at the feet of Vashishta.

Vashishta replied, “Rama! Lord of the Raghu dynasty! Why do you speak thus? You have not realised how happy and contented these people are, since they are fortunate enough to be looking at your charm.” When the people heard that Rama had requested them to return, each one of them felt tossed into fear and despair, as a boat caught in a hurricane in mid-sea. But when they heard the Sage Vashishta pleading on their behalf, they sailed smooth, as the boat does, when a friendly breeze blows into its sails. Their minds rejected the thought of returning to Ayodhya, and giving up the fortunate chance of the bath, three times a day, in the Mandakini River, living on the sweet simple meal of fruits, roots and tubers gathered by their own efforts from the forest and more than all, filling their eyes with the pictures of Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana and their ears with the edifying and exquisite words of Rama. (*RKRV Part I p.446-447*)

Vashishta asks Bharatha to enthrone the Sandals:

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 Vashishta¹⁵⁸ who told Bharatha: “Do not cause any pain to Rama, who is Divinity itself and who has come down to protect the good-and uphold *Dharma*.” (*SSS Vol.20 p.54*)

Bharatha was not in a position to overrule Rama’s orders. Bharatha did not like to become the king and rule the kingdom. In this conflict, Rama tried to console Bharatha. Vashishta then gave a small advice which would give satisfaction to Bharatha. Vashishta said, “You can take the sandals of Rama, and regarding those sandals as symbolic of Rama, perform the coronation for the sandals and carry on the rule of Ayodhya.” He could not throw away the orders and suggestions given by the *Guru*. He could not also contradict the orders of Rama. So, with a very heavy heart, he agreed to receive the sandals. (*SSB 1977 p.72*)

Vashishta and his consort leave with a heavy heart:

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana approached each chariot before it left and consoled and comforted each occupant and persuaded them to leave. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana fell at the feet of the Preceptor and apologised to him, saying that they had caused him and his consort a lot of trouble. They expressed sorrow that

¹⁵⁸ See chapter, *Bharatha - Bharatha prays to Vashishta to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya:*

they could not serve them as well as they wished to, and as their duty demanded. Then they asked permission to stay back.

Vashishta was of course a Bhahmajnani and a Maharshi, so he could know the inner feelings of Sita and others. He appreciated the devotion and humility of the brothers and Sita and their strict adherence to the path of Dharma. Vashishta and his consort could not leave the presence of Rama, for they were so attached to the virtues he embodied. The picture of those three standing by the side of the jungle track with folded palms, bidding adieu to each passing chariot and the people inside, melted the most adamant heart. Vashishta and his consort, Arundathi, were very much moved at the sight of their large-hearted sympathy. *(RKRV Part I p. 476-477)*

THE CORONATION

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.

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. *(RKRV Part II p.277)*

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 received the assent of Vashishta to disentangle his own matted hair and had his auspicious bath.

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.” (*RKR V Part II p.279-280*)

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 Authority. **(RKR Part II p.281-282)**

ASWAMEDHA YAGA:

Vashishta and others who were in great sorrow at the fate of Sita thought of a stratagem to get her back to Ayodhya; they persuaded Rama to agree to the performance of an *Aswamedha*¹⁵⁹ sacrifice; the main performer of *this yajna* must have a legally wedded wife as an active participant and sharer; otherwise, he cannot claim the right to perform the rite! So since Rama will never take another wife, they hoped Rama will recall Sita so that he may perform the sacrifice, as agreed upon. But, Rama was too clever for them; he observed the *Sastric* rule correctly, by making a golden image of Sita and allowing it to take the place of the living wife, during the ceremony. **(SSS Vol.5 p.73-74)**

¹⁵⁹ See Chapter, *Lava And Kusha*

CHARACTERIZATION OF VASHISHTA

Vashishta was a Brahmarishi

Vashishta was a great saint who had a vision of this *ananda*. He experienced this *ananda* and knew what bliss was. This is the reason why Vashishta was always described as a *Brahmarishi*. Vashishta had the great good fortune of performing the naming ceremony of Ramachandra, of giving Him the first morsel of food, of initiating Him into studies and of performing His *Upanayanam*. Such a great saint with such good fortune will be recognised as one who has had the direct vision of *ananda* and experienced the bliss of *ananda*. On many occasions Viswamitra showed a considerable amount of jealousy towards Vashishta. On some occasions, Viswamitra also tried to kill Vashishta. Still, Vashishta was so generous that he treated Viswamitra with great kindness. Such peace and such *prema* and freedom from hatred and jealousy can come only to great saints who had a direct vision of *ananda*. (SSB 1977 p.127-128)

Vashishta, Viswamitra and other sages acquired amazing powers through their Satwic Thapas, performed with pure unselfish motives. They rose at last to the status of Brahmarishis too. Thapas is classified into another series of three: mental, physical and vocal. You may ask which is the most important of these three. I must tell you that all three are important. Yet, if the mental thapas is attended to, the other two follow. (*Bhagavatha Vahini* p.204)

Vashishta attained the title of *Brahmarishi* and Viswamitra also wanted to attain the title of *Brahmarishi*. Even after years of *Thapas*, he could not attain the same. Viswamitra became furious because even when the world honoured him with the appellation of *Brahmarishi*, Vashishta did not agree to call him so. Anger induced the thought in Viswamitra that if he eliminated Vashishta from the world, then everyone would honour him with the name of *Brahmarishi*.

Once, on a moonlight night, Vashishta was describing to his pupils the qualities of Viswamitra. Viswamitra, who was hiding behind a bush with a sword in his hand to stab Vashishta, happened to hear the glowing tributes

Vashishta was paying to Viswamitra. Vashishta was not aware that Viswamitra was hiding behind the bush and in his normal manner was describing the good qualities of Viswamitra's *tapas*, which he compared to the moonlight. This brought about a sudden transformation in Viswamitra. He began to repent in his mind his decision to kill Vashishta, who was such a great man and was talking about his fine qualities. He thought how bad he was when he entertained the thought of killing him. He felt that he must make amends and fell at the feet of Vashishta, expressing his repentance.

He did so and Vashishta with a beautiful smile said: "Great *Brahmarishi*, wherefrom have you come?" When Vashishta addressed him thus Viswamitra was surprised and felt quite repentant¹⁶⁰. Vashishta said: "Today you really deserve the appellation of *Brahmarishi*, because you have eliminated all your anger and ego and fell at my feet in a mood of utter repentance."¹⁶¹

We must recognise the truth underlying this episode. So long as there is the feeling of anger and ego in our hearts, we will not be able to feel well in our life and will feel sick in our mind. One's anger is one's greatest enemy and one's calmness is one's protection. One's joy is one's heaven and one's sorrow is one's hell. He who is possessed by anger will be hated by people because he will commit a number of bad deeds. Anger leads to many great sins. First we must endeavour to control this emotion of anger. Sometimes, ego also enters the feeling of anger. The prestige of an individual is

¹⁶⁰ He even challenged Vashishta but realised that Vashishta had something he did not possess and that was the strength of God, which is superior to all other kinds of strength. (*SSB 1972 p.211*)

¹⁶¹ Vashishta explained that he could not be styled *Brahmarishi*, so long as the ego persisted in him. When the swelling of the head disappeared and he fell at the feet of his rival, he became entitled for the honour he no longer coveted, and so deserved. He who aspires to be a guide of the people must first free himself of selfish propensities, of hate and malice. His words must be sweet to the ear and food to the spirit. They must be valued by all men as the panacea they need. If one is not capable of this high poetry, one must try to reach that height by purifying one's nature and clarifying one's outlook on this world and the next. (*SSS Vol.5 p.97*)

sometimes undermined by one's own wealth and one's pride in wealth. One's wealth creates a kind of barrier between him and his kith and kin. People lose everything and are exposed to great suffering because of their anger.

If we aim at transcendental reality and Divinity, we must decide to bring this great emotion of anger under control. Anger is caused by weakness. It is not the weakness of the body but of the mind. To give strength to our mind and remove the weakness from our mind, it is necessary to fill it with good thoughts, good feelings and good ideas. While the funeral pyre consumes the dead, *chinta*, or an agitated mind, reduces to ashes the living body. It is a living death if one is obsessed by pride, ego and anger. A state of mind in which one overcomes these things is described as *sthita-prajna*. A *sthitaprajna* is one who is neither elated by joy nor depressed by sorrow. He can take joy and sorrow in his stride with the same equanimity of mind. (*SSB 1972 p.236-237*)

Vashishta was the chest house of Atharva Veda:

The Veda has various popular names—Brahma Veda, Angiro Veda, Artharvangiro Veda, Bhaishajya Veda. Kalidasa has praised sage Vashishta as “*Atharva Nidhi*” (the Treasure Chest of Atharva knowledge). As a result of his earning such high renown, Vashishta was installed as Rajaguru (Royal Preceptor) and could claim mastery over all the four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva) and the authority to supervise ritual sacrifices and perform scriptural rites and ceremonies. (*Leela Kaivalya Vahini p.25*)

Vashishta realised that Rama was the personification of Dharma:

In the Ramayana, although in many situations Rama appears to act like an ordinary human being, sage Vashishta, who knew his *Aathmic* Reality, observed: "Rama! You are the very embodiment of *Dharma* (right action). You are not this corporeal entity, made up of flesh and blood. You are the embodiment of all the sacred *mantras*. You are not of the earth. You are the Eternal Spirit. The common folk may regard you as an ordinary mortal. But the *Yogis* (liberated persons) experience you as the Divine upholder of *Dharma*." The Rama *avatar* is the very incarnation of Dharma. 'Raa' means "*purushathwam*" (the quality of manliness), "*mahaapurushathwam*" (super-human quality). "Maa" has also got several meanings. "*Rama*" symbolises the

unity of *Prakrithi* (creation) and *Paramaathma* (the Omniself). (*SSS Vol.17 p.168*)

Vashishta felt that Rama incarnated as the embodiment of *dharma*. That is why, he declared *Ramo Vighrahavan Dharmah*, i.e., Rama is the embodiment of *Dharma*. (*SSB 1974 Part II p.240*) Rama is the personification of *Dharma*. *Dharma* itself incarnated in the form of Rama. You should follow *Dharma*. Which *Dharma* should you follow? Do not follow the *Dharma* associated with your mind. Follow the principle of *Dharma* which comes from your heart. You should recognise the glory of this name. (*SSS Vol.40 p.104*)

Vashishta achieved the goal for which he waited for a long time:

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." (*RKRV Part II p.281*)

Accepted the profession of Family Preceptor on the advice of Brahma

One day, Vashishta entered the Palace in order to see Rama, the Grantor of prosperity in all fields. Rama received him in true traditional style, washing his feet and offering sanctified water as drink. He raised his folded palms and said, "Oh Ocean of Compassion! I have a request to make. I have been watching most delightfully your 'play as man.' I am beset with a big doubt, now. Your potency is limitless. Even the Vedas do not know fully your Nature. Lord! How can I describe you, or decipher you? This profession of Family Preceptor or Priest is rather derogatory. The Vedas, Sastras and Puranas declare that priesthood is inferior in status, since it is a mean occupation. He has to officiate at all the ceremonies in his master's household, both auspicious and inauspicious. Therefore, it is contaminated.

First I did not agree at all to enter this profession, but Brahma saw me and understood my plight. He told me, 'Son! You do not know what lies in the future. Accept the profession, without demur. You stand to gain enormously in the coming years. The Parabrahma will incarnate in the Raghu dynasty.' Hearing this, I bowed my head to this profession and became the Family

Priest of the Raghu dynasty. I have now, as a result of that decision, attained that Supreme Principle, which can be won only by means of countless years of Japa, Thapas, Meditation and Yoga, besides the performance of many Yagas and Yajnas, without putting myself into the hardship involved in these. All those good Karmas have as the goal to be won, and I have won you¹⁶².

“What better work have I to do than the one I have chosen? Lord of Lords! Japa, Thapas, Yajnas, Yagas, Vows, Rites and Ritual rules have been laid down in the Vedas. Through the cultivation of wisdom, compassion towards living beings, and virtuous conduct, your Presence and Grace can be attained. Lord! I am praying for a boon. Grant me that in your infinite mercy. Shower your Grace on me from the corner of your compassion-filled eye. Let my devotion for you be undiminished, however many lives I have to live hereafter. This is the boon I crave for.” Later Vashishta returned to his residence, taking leave of Rama. (*RKR Part II p.299-300*)

All Powerful-Prayer

Once, Sage Vashishta and Janaka visited Valmiki. Valmiki sacrificed a cow, cooked the meat and served the guests. Though it was meat, Vashishta thought that it would not be good on his part to refuse when Valmiki offered with so much love. It is after all the duty of the host to serve. So Vashishta chanted Brahmaarpanam and ate the meat. After eating, when he was going to wash his hands, the cow came back to life. That is the power of God. What

¹⁶² *One* should understand the significance and inner meaning of Vashishta who had all kinds of strength and powers in him, conducting himself as an ordinary *purohit* in the house of Ramachandra. Vashishta 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 the human form of Ramachandra. He was desiring the company of Ramachandra and such sacred thoughts took him to the household. Viswamitra was also like that. His great achievements and his courage are indescribable by ordinary words. He had very many potent weapons with him. He never cared for the great weapons which he possessed in his own house. He knew that Narayana, Himself, came as a young boy and was born in Dasaratha’s household. (*SSB 1977 p.128*)

was meat also became a vegetarian meal when partaken with all – powerful prayer! (*Heart to Heart Part I p.15*)

Great Renunciator:

Sage Vashishta is also said to have renounced a kingdom, offered him by Rama. (*SSS Vol.4 p.290*)

Silence is golden:

Great sages like Vashishta and Viswamitra, by observing silence, could enjoy and have the vision of the *Anandamaya Kosa* and they could set good examples to the world. (*SSB 1977 p.132*)

Eschew evil and be fixed in Faith

If *amrith* is given, one has to live up to that status, the status of having acquired the Grace of God. Vashishta commissioned Raghu, the Emperor, to tend his cow, the celestial *Kamadhenu*. Since it was an order that emanated from his spiritual preceptor, Raghu himself took up that task and led the cow into the pastures. One day, when a lion threatened to pounce upon Kamadhenu, and insisted that she must be given to him for his lunch, as he was hungry, Raghu offered his own body instead. That is how one has to live up to the status assigned to him. When you are raised to the status of *amrith* receivers, you must eschew evil and be fixed in faith.

I have no intention to create and give *amrith* on this Vaikuntha Ekadhashi day. For no one walks on the path I have chalked out, no one feels bound by the advice I give. Your enthusiasm is short lived; your resolution to follow My instructions evaporate quickly. As boiling milk rises, overflows and becomes still, devotion develops and dies soon. It does not stay unshaken. Today, in certain Vishnu temples, a special door called the *Vaikuntha-dhwaara* is opened, and people can pass through it into the presence. *Vaikuntha-dhwaara* is the Gate to Heaven, that is to say, the gateway to self-realisation. The gateway to that heaven is not to be found only there; it will open, right in front of you, wherever you are. Knock and it will open. (*SSS Vol.6 p.112-113*)

Man is born out of Karma,
He lives and dies in Karma.
Karma is verily God,
And it is responsible for man's
Happiness and sorrow.

(Telugu poem)

11.11 VISWAMITRA



Figure 17: Rama releases Ahalya from curse

Source of the Photo:

Artist Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906)

Title **English:** Release of Ahalya

Description **English:** Rama releasing Ahalya from curse. Lakshmana and sage Vishvamitra are present.

Date before 1910

Medium Lithographic Print

VISWAMITRA

Brahmarishi Viswamitra is one of the most venerated rishis or sages of ancient times in India. He is also credited as the author of most of Mandala 3 of the Rig-Veda, including the Gayatri Mantra. The Puranas mention that only 24 Rishis since antiquity have understood the whole meaning of, and thus wielded the whole power of, the Gayatri Mantra. Sage Viswamitra is supposed to be the first, and Sage Yajnavalkya the last.

The story of Viswamitra is narrated in the Balakanda of Valmiki Ramayana. The Mahabharata adds that Viswamitra's relationship with Menaka resulted in a daughter, Shakuntala whose story is narrated in the Adi Parva of the Mahabharata.

Viswamitra was a king in ancient India also called Kaushika ("the descendant of Kusha"). He was a valiant warrior and the great-grandson of a great king named Kusha. The Valmiki Ramayana, prose 51 of Bala Kanda, starts the legend of Viswamitra thus, "There was a king named Kusha (not to be confused with Kusha, son of Rama), a brainchild of Prajapati (Brahma), and Kusha's son was the powerful and verily

righteous Kushanaabha. One who is highly renowned by the name Gadhi was the son of Kushanaabha, and Gadhi's son is this great-saint of great resplendence, Viswamitra. Viswamitra ruled the earth, and this great-resplendent king ruled the kingdom for many thousands of years."

His story also appears in various Puranas, however they show variations from the Ramayana. The Vishnu Purana and Harivamsha chapter 27 (dynasty of Amavasu) of Mahabharata narrates the birth of Viswamitra. According to Vishnu Purana, Kaushika married a damsel belonging to Purukutsa (later called as Shatamarshana lineage - descendents of Ikshvaku king Trasadasyu) dynasty and had a son by name Gadhi who had a daughter named Satyavati (not to be confused with Satyavati of Mahabharata).

Satyavati was married to an old Brahman known as Ruchika who was foremost among the race of Bhrigu. Ruchika desired a son having the qualities of a Brahman, and so he gave Satyavati a sacrificial offering (charu) which he had prepared to achieve this objective. He also gave Satyavati's mother another charu to make her conceive a son with the character of a Kshatriya at her request. But Satyavati's mother privately asked Satyavati to exchange her charu with her. This resulted in Satyavati's mother giving birth to Viswamitra , the son of a Kshatriya Gadhi with the qualities of a Brahman; and Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni, the father of Parasurama, a Brahman with qualities of a Kshatriya.

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

VISWAMITRA¹⁶³ Sage; known for efforts to equal Vashishta. Born as warrior Kaushika¹⁶⁴, who by the power of *Gayatri* transformed himself spiritually. Early counsellor of young Rama. (*Dhyana Vahini p.125*)

Kaushika's Lineage:

The day's journey brought (*Viswamitra, Rama, Lakshmana and his disciples*) to the bank of the Sona River. They had perforce to spend the night at that place itself. They took their bath in the river and finished the evening ablutions. Then they gathered around the Master eager to listen to his tales. Rama asked: "Revered Sir, this region appears rich and prosperous. What is its name and history, I would like to know." Viswamitra replied, "Rama! Brahma had a son through sheer Will. He was named Kusa¹⁶⁵. He was a great ascetic, steadfast and strict in vows, heroic in spiritual adventure, learned in the science of morals. He wedded the daughter of the noble ruler of Vidarbha. The two lived in the awareness and practice of the four ends of human life, Righteousness, Prosperity, Affection and Liberation. They had four sons—Kusamba, Kusanabha, Adhoortharajaka and Vasu—each one, equal to the father in virtue, and highly evolved in righteousness, integrity and other excellences of the warrior caste.

¹⁶³ Also spelt as Vishwamithra

¹⁶⁴ Kausika (Kaushika). Name for Viswamitra, since he was Kusa's son. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

¹⁶⁵ Kusa (Kusha). Descendent of Brahma and father of Kusamba, Kusanabha, Asurtha-rajasa, and Vasu. (*ibid*)

Kusa divided the world into four parts and assigned one part to each of them, directing them thus: “Sons! Rule over the part assigned to each of you and prosper!” Thereafter, they entered upon their new duties and carried out their father’s command. Each of them started constructing a capital city for the kingdom—Kusamba built Kausambi, Kusanabha built Mahodaya, Adhoortharajaka built Dharmaranya and Vasu built Girivraja. Rama! This area is part of the kingdom of Vasu. We have all around us five hills, and so, this City is called Girivraja (Collection of Hills). This auspicious Sona river is also known as Sumagadhi, so that this region is named Magadha. The Magadhi flows from east to west here, like a jasmine garland placed among the mountain valleys. The majesty of Vasu has blessed the land on both banks of this river to be ever green and plentiful.

The second son, Kusanabha, was well established in Dharma. He was a pillar of Righteousness. He had a number of daughters, but, no son. He taught them right conduct and behaviour according to the rules and disciplines laid down in the scriptures. He emphasised that forbearance is the grandest gift one can give another. It is the most prolific fruit-bearing Yajna, the most beneficial way of being honest and the root of all right thought and action. He gave them this lesson even from the days when they were fed at the mother’s breast. They were later given in marriage—all of them—to the ruler of Kampilya City¹⁶⁶, Brahmadata by name. When they left for that City, his house became empty and barren.

¹⁶⁶ Kampilya (Kaampilya). A city, ruled by Brahmadata (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

“Alas,” he moaned, “This house which was so bright and resonant with wit and laughter has today become dark and dumb, dull and deep in gloom. Daughters, however many you may have, have to leave the parental home rendering it drab and dreary. If only I had a son, this calamity would not have overpowered me.” Thus He entertained the longing for a son.

Just then, his father, Kusa, happened to visit him and he enquired the reason why he looked sad and full of concern. The son laid bare before him his mind and its anxieties. Kusa chided him for becoming so worried for this particular reason. He blessed him that he get a son soon. And as he blessed, so it happened. The son born was named Gaadhi. He grew up a very devoted virtuous prince. Since he was born in the lineage of Kusa, he was known as Kaushika.

His sisters lost their husbands after some time and as dutiful wives, they immolated themselves and gained heaven. They were born on the Himalayas as sacred rivers which joined together to form the famous Kausiki¹⁶⁷ river. Kaushika was attached very much to the eldest of the sisters, Satyavati by name and so, he took residence on the bank of this river, and established himself at Siddha Ashram, and celebrated the Yajna he had resolved upon with ceremonial rectitude.

¹⁶⁷ Kausiki (Kaushiki). Now the modern river of Kosi in Bihar. Viswamitra's hermitage stood on its bank. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Rama! Through your immeasurable heroism, the Yajna I had resolved upon has come to its successful conclusion. It has borne fruit. My rigorous vows have been fulfilled.”

At this, the monks who had gathered around the sage exclaimed, “Oh, how wonderful! Really, we are fortunate that we could listen to the story of the hoary ancestors of our Master! Oh, what a great source of joy the story is! The Kusa line is indeed consecrated. Those born in it are equal to Brahma Himself in sanctity. How lucky we are that we have this singular chance to serve the one visible embodiment of all that the line represents the sage Viswamitra. This chance must be the fruit of merit accumulated through many lives in the past.” Viswamitra interrupted them and said, “I would not have dwelt on all this, but Rama! your question prompted me to reply. I do not give details regarding this body and its antecedents. It is already night, let us rest. Delay in going to sleep might slacken the speed of our journey tomorrow. Rama! See! The Moon is peeping through the branches of yonder tree to catch a glimpse of you! It sends down cool rays to refresh the earth that has suffered long the hot rays of the sun.” That night, everyone was ruminating over the tales of the forefathers of the Master. (*RKR V Part I p.127-131*)

The story of Kaushika:

Kaushika was originally a king¹⁶⁸. Many, many years ago, he went to the forest for a hunt. He was exhausted after a full day of hunting. He came across a hermitage—Sage Vashishta’s hermitage. He paid his respects to Vashishta. Enthralled by the

¹⁶⁸ Viswamitra was a Kshatriya. (*Jnana Vahini p.30*)

serenity and natural beauty of the hermitage, Kaushika tarried there, conversing with Vashishta. After some time, he requested Vashishta's permission to return to his city. Vashishta said, "You are the emperor of this land. Under your rule, we ascetics are able to live peacefully in the forest. Through your administrative policies, you are ever attentive to the protection and care of sages. It is our duty to honour our King as a special guest. You must accept my hospitality."

Kaushika said humbly, "Swami! I am not here alone. Thousands of soldiers are with me. If you give me a glass of water or milk, that is sufficient. Please don't trouble yourself." Vashishta said, "O King! There is no dearth of anything in this hermitage. Where God's Grace showers, all-round abundance follows. I am capable of providing hospitality to any number of your soldiers." Kaushika was surprised. He wondered, "How is this sage planning to provide my entire army with food?" Kaushika's arrogance rose and he thought "Let me test this sage." He agreed to Vashishta's request.

Vashishta called out lovingly, "Sabali, Sabali!" A cow came there. Vashishta told the cow, "Look here, Sabali. The king is our guest today. Please arrange for his comfort and that of his soldiers." In the twinkling of an eye, everything appeared! Sabali was a Kamadhenu, a wish-fulfilling cow gifted by Lord Brahma. There was food even for Kaushika's elephants and horses, what to talk of his soldiers and himself! Kaushika was an emperor. But even his royal kitchens had never produced such delicious food. Arrogance and greed entered Kaushika's heart. He thought,

“This miraculous cow must reside with a King, not with a recluse in a forest.”

Kaushika finished eating. Then he told Vashishta, “O Sage! I have a small request. Please give me Sabali.” Vashishta said, “That is impossible. Sabali is meant to be with me.” Kaushika tried to convince him in many ways but Vashishta wouldn’t yield. Kaushika lost his patience, turned to his soldiers and said, “Drag this cow to our city.” The soldiers began dragging Sabali away and she cried out to Vashishta, “Guru Ji! What fault have I done? Why do you let them drag me away?”

Vashishta told her, “Here is a king who is proud of his physical and intellectual strength, but he has no strength of virtue. How can I reason with a king devoid of virtue?” He tried advising Kaushika, but to no avail. Now, Kaushika’s army consisted of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Who could defy such a force? Knowing Sabali’s strength, Vashishta told her, “I permit you to deal with them as you wish.”

All of a sudden, Sabali created a divine army of millions out of nowhere, which fell upon Kaushika’s army. Kaushika’s men were annihilated in a matter of minutes. Not a single soldier survived. Even the sons of Kaushika were not spared! The only one left alive was Kaushika himself, who returned home humiliated. Since then, his hatred for Vashishta grew into a raging fire.

Kaushika's anger and hatred were a curse to him. Vashishta was ever peaceful, even during this incident. Vashishta cautioned him, "The angry man cannot succeed. He commits sins and loses his respect. He distances himself from his near and dear ones and is despised by all. This dire enemy, anger, destroys every happiness of man. Your enemy is within you, not outside." But Vashishta's peaceful demeanour and advice would cause Kaushika's anger to increase even more! (*SSB 1995 p.96-99*)

Thrishanku and Viswamitra

Thrishanku, of the Lunar dynasty; was a noble, pious king, but developed an irrational desire to go to heaven in his human body. His preceptor, Brahmarishi Vashishta told him that his desire was like seeing to pack an unsuspecting dead body and taking it to heaven. Thrishanku was adamant, but Vashishta refused to help him in his unholy desire. The king approached the learned sons of Vashishta, who had immense spiritual powers. They refused to help one who had defied the advice of his own preceptor, their father. Finally the king approached sage Kaushika, who harboured an ill-feeling towards Vashishta because of an earlier encounter with him. Kaushika agreed to take up the case of Thrishanku as a challenge. He performed a *Yajna* for the purpose of sending Thrishanku bodily straight to heaven. At the conclusion of the *Yajna*, the gods did not come down to accept the offering. Enraged by this, Kaushika concentrated all the powers acquired by him by his penance on his Brahmahanda (flagstaff) to transport Thrishanku to heaven. But Indra, the Lord of the celestial ones, blocked his path and Thrishanku came hurtling down, towards the earth. On seeing

this, Kaushika stopped him in the middle of the firmament and proceeded to create a parallel heaven, with all its paraphernalia. Even today, it is known as *Thrishanku Swarga* (In western astronomy, this is known as the constellation Southern Cross, consisting of four stars).

Consequences of breach of promise

King Thrishanku had a son by name Harishchandra (not Emperor Harishchandra who sacrificed everything for truth). This Harishchandra had no sons and prayed to Lord Varuna (the Rain God) for a son, with the promise that he would sacrifice his son later to the same God. He got a son, Rahul. As he became attached to the son, he did not keep his promise and was afflicted by a strange disease.

Rahul, being afraid of the consequences of his father's failure to keep his promise, fled to the forest. He got the idea that his father's illness could be cured if someone else was offered to Varuna in his place. Seeing a Brahman couple with three children, he asked them to offer one of the sons for sacrifice in return for a large herd of cows and other wealth. The Brahman was attached to the eldest son and would not part with him. His wife was attached to the youngest son and would not let him go. So it was the middle son who was offered and preferred to die as an offering to God, rather than live without the love of father and mother. Rahul was taking this boy with him when on the way they passed through Kaushika's Ashram. The Brahman boy, Shunassepha, sought refuge with the sage. Pledging to protect him, Kaushika asked one of his sons to go with Rahul, saying

that the human body has to be offered in service to others. His sons ridiculed the idea and declined to comply with Kaushika's proposal. Thereupon the sage taught Shunassepha a *mantra* to propitiate Lord Varuna. The boy chanted the *mantra* and Lord Varuna appeared before him and chided Harishchandra for agreeing to offer his son to Varuna and then going back on his word and offering someone else in his place. He said because of his breaking the promise, he would be consumed by the disease afflicting him.

Lessons to be learnt from this story:

Students should learn from this the lesson that they must not develop excessive attachment to anything and should always keep their plighted word.

Sage Kaushika himself was a victim of an unbecoming desire (when he was an emperor) to possess the wish-fulfilling cow of sage Vashishta. Foiled in his attempt, he embarked on severe penances to acquire the title of Brahmarishi on a par with Vashishta. He forfeited the fruits of his penances several times before he could earn ultimately the title of Brahmarishi from Vashishta himself. (*SSS Vol.28*¹⁶⁹ *p.161-163*)

Thrishanku was only a king. But look at the Sage Kaushika! He had immense wisdom and tremendous penance to his credit. Yet, he stooped to the level of helping *Thrishanku* in his questionable desire. Kaushika would not have helped *Thrishanku* under

¹⁶⁹ **From the discourse on 25-5-1995**

normal circumstances, but his hatred for Vashishta made him take that step. Hatred clouds discrimination. What is the use of arduous penance, Yajnas and many kinds of education? Kaushika was a master of all scriptures, possessed boundless spiritual power and was an embodiment of dharma. But he allowed hatred into his heart and laid all these virtues to waste. He performed a task that even ordinary people would have recognized as wrong!

For this reason Kaushika's respect gradually diminished. Only his penance and powers sustained his waning reputation. Kaushika's penance had jealousy as its foundation. He was jealous that Vashishta had earned the title of Brahmarishi. Despite his penance, Kaushika could not curb his anger. Even after Brahma appeared to him and honoured him with the title of Rajarishi, his anger did not subside. Brahma knew that Kaushika was full of Rajo Guna and hence, gave him the title of Rajarishi. One with rajas is a Rajarishi. The one who recognizes the nature of Brahman and acts according to the prompting of the Atma is a Brahmarishi. (*SSB 1995 p.96-97*)

From emperor to *Brahmarishi*

Coming to the *Rajasic* quality; it is characteristic of persons belonging to the *Kshatriya* (warrior) caste. Hatred, jealousy, ostentation, egoistic pride, are some of the traits associated with the *Rajasic* quality. The sage who exemplifies the transformation from the *Rajasic* to *Satwic* quality is *Viswamitra*. *Viswamitra*, who was steeped in *Rajasic* tendencies, became a great *Rajarishi* and later a *Brahmarishi*. His antipathy to sage Vashishta went to

the extent of even contemplating the destruction of the sage. *Viswamitra* was hovering near the *ashram* when he overheard a conversation between Vashishta and his spouse, Arundathi. Arundathi expressed her admiration for the beautiful unblemished light the full moon was shedding that night. Immediately Vashishta observed: "Tonight's full moon is shining untainted like the pure penance of *Viswamitra*."

On hearing these words, *Viswamitra* realised how mistaken he was regarding Vashishta and rushed into the ashram, fell at the feet of Vashishta and prayed to him to forgive him. Vashishta lifted *Viswamitra* and hailed him as Brahmarishi (a sage who has realised the Supreme Self). Vashishta, who had previously described *Viswamitra* as a *Rajarishi* (a royal sage), spontaneously hailed him as a Brahmarishi. *Viswamitra* could not contain himself and asked Vashishta on what grounds he was calling *Viswamitra* a Brahmarishi. Vashishta said: "*Viswamitra!* Hitherto you were filled with self-conceit. You are born with ego, grew with ego, and never bowed your head to anyone. Today you put an end to your ego and fell at my feet. This is the significance of egolessness. A *Brahmarishi* is one who is free from egoism, acquisitiveness, pride and arrogance. (*SSS Vol.29 p.195-196*)

Viswamitra also wanted to acquire this name of a Brahmarishi and he himself undertook great penance and then acquired the aspect of Brahman. As a result of his penance, *Viswamitra* could have the vision of Brahman and as soon as he had the vision of Brahman, he was addressed as Brahmarishi by Brahma Himself.

Viswamitra was not satisfied by merely being addressed as a Brahmarishi. He said that he wanted to directly experience the Omkara and the vashadkara which the Veda has explained. Viswamitra understood that by getting merely the name of Brahma rishi he was not going to get the aspect of Brahmarishi. He would truly become rishi only when he grasped the meaning of the sound ‘Om’ and of Veda. Because Viswamitra had surrendered everything to Brahma, these aspects were taught to Viswamitra by Brahma Himself. If one is able to get the grace of Brahma, then everything will be under control. If you are far away from the grace of Brahman, all the evil planets will begin to influence you. Viswamitra was one who had no acquaintance whatsoever with the contents of Veda. In spite of this, Brahman Himself taught him these things because of His grace. ‘Sakthipata’ was given to Viswamitra by the Lord and we have to examine the meaning of this word. Sakthipata means that the guru hands over in one shower all the capacities to the disciple. This however is not the correct meaning. When we make this statement, it means that there is a guru and there is a disciple to whom the Sakthi is being handed over. It is contradiction to the statement “Sarvam Brahma mayam.” This Sakthipata is something that is given only when there is deservedness.

The aspect of Brahman is not something which can be given by one to another. (*SSB 1974 p.43-44*)

VISHWAMITRA'S ROLE IN RAMAYANA

Viswamitra comes to Ayodhya

The story of Viswamitra begins with taking Rama and Lakshmana with him (*SSB 1977 p.132*). During those days in the region east of Ayodhya, the royal city, the sage Viswamitra was engaged in rigorous asceticism. He resolved upon a holy rite, known as Yajna. But however often he inaugurated it; the demons desecrated the rite and fouled its sanctity. They showered pieces of flesh on the sacred area and made it unfit for such Vedic ceremonies. In many other ways, too, they cast obstacles and halted the holy mission. Viswamitra was at his wits' end. He went to the capital city of the empire, Ayodhya, to meet the Ruler himself.

When reports arrived of the coming of the sage, the King sent his ministers to bring him with due honours into the Palace. They welcomed him at the City Gate and accompanied him right up to the Palace door. At the Palace, Brahmins recited Vedic hymns, while Dasaratha washed his feet, and as laid down in the sacred texts and as is customary in receptions of sages, he sprinkled upon his own head drops of the water so sanctified. Viswamitra was led into the inner apartments and seated on a high chair, with the members of the royal court standing reverentially round him. "This is indeed a great day!" exclaimed Dasaratha. He expressed his joy at the unexpected arrival of the holy personage and the opportunity he gained to serve and honour him. Viswamitra directed the King and the ministers to sit and they obeyed.

The sage graciously enquired about the health and welfare of the King and royal family, and about the peace and prosperity of the kingdom. He asked him whether his reign was marked by strength and security and whether his government was ensuring the continued progress of his subjects. Dasaratha replied that, as a result of the Grace of God and the blessings of saints and sages, his subjects were dutifully and gladly engaged in their several tasks without fear of failure and that the administration had before it the steady promotion of the welfare of the people. He said that his government was serving the people in many ways to promote and preserve their happiness and security. Dasaratha yearned to know the reason for the sage's arrival. He assured him that he was ever ready to fulfil his least desire. He declared with great devotion that he will discharge earnestly any duty that the sage may cast on him. He was only waiting to know what he could do for him. Viswamitra nodded his head in approval.

He turned towards Dasaratha and said, "I shall not declare now, before you, that you are a very righteous ruler, that you revere guests and supplicants, and that you are the embodiment of faith and devotion; the fact that the empire is happy under your rule is enough evidence of this. The welfare of the subjects depends on the character of the rulers. People will have peace or will suffer anxiety, when the rulers are either good or bad. Wherever I have enquired, I am told it is only in Ayodhya that we have a people full of love and loyalty to the sovereign and a sovereign full of affection and regard to his people. In every nook and corner of your kingdom, I hear this heartening news! Therefore, I know that your words come straight from the heart. I have not the least

doubt. You will not deviate from your promise. You will adhere to the word once given.”

These words of the sage moved Dasaratha deeply. “Great men will engage themselves only in activities that help the world. And whatever they do, they will not stray from the injunctions of the scriptures. There must be a good reason for whatever they contemplate; they are prompted by the Divine Will in every act of theirs. So, I am ever willing, with all the resources at my command, to serve you and fulfil your slightest wish,” he replied. Dasaratha vowed again and again that he would carry out the sage’s command.

This made the sage very glad. “Yes! As you said, we do not emerge from our hermitages without reason. I have come to you on a high purpose! Listening to your enthusiastic response, I am doubly happy! I am filled with joy that my errand has borne fruit. You will stand by your promise, will you not?” asked Viswamitra. Dasaratha replied without delay. “Master! You should, perhaps ask others such a question; but, Dasaratha is not the person to break the pledged word! He will give up his life rather than bring dishonour on himself, going back on his promise. What greater treasure can a monarch have than morality and integrity? They alone stand by him as sources of strength while discharging his manifold responsibilities. If these two are lost, the kingdom becomes a mansion without light, a wilderness beset with apish vagaries and factional fights. It will be torn by anarchy and terror. In the end, the king will meet with disaster. I am certain that such a calamity can never overwhelm my dynasty

for ages to come. Therefore, without entertaining any shadow of doubt, tell me the mission that brought you to Ayodhya, and accept the service that this devoted servant is ready to offer.”

Viswamitra said, “No, no! I had no doubt in my mind. I simply uttered those words in order to hear this assertion of your steady adherence to truth! I know that the Ikshvaku rulers are intensely wedded to the duty of fulfilling the spoken word. Well! I require from you only one thing now. It is neither wealth nor vehicles, neither cows nor gold, nor regiments nor attendants. I need only two of your sons, Rama and Lakshmana, to accompany me. What do you say to this?” the sage asked.

At this, Dasaratha lost balance. He fell back and could not recover soon. Regaining his composure after some time, he gasped for courage to utter a few words. He said, “Master! Of what use will those boys be for you? The mission on which you intend to take those boys can be better fulfilled by me, don’t you think so? Give me the chance. Let me make my life worthwhile. Tell me what it is. I shall derive joy there from.” The sage replied, “My firm belief is that the task which these boys can fulfil can be undertaken by no one else. They alone can accomplish this task. Neither your millions nor even you can carry it out! Boys such as these have not been born before! Nor will such be born again! This is my conviction.”

“Listen! I resolved upon the performance of a celebrated Yajna (sacrificial rite). But as soon as I enter upon its preliminaries, evil spirits and demons assemble from nowhere and cause

sacrilegious obstruction. They cause interruptions and pile hindrances. I want these boys to ward off those demons and save the Yajna from these abominations, so that I can bring it to a successful conclusion. This is my purpose, my desire. What do you say now?” asked Viswamitra, in a serious voice.

The King replied, “Master! These tender little boys, how can they perform such a tremendous task? I am here, most willing and most ready. I shall come with my chariotry, infantry, cavalry and elephantry and guard the area of the sacrifice and your hermitage. I shall see that the Yajna is conducted with full success without the least interruption. I have some experience in fighting against these demoniac forces, since, as you know, I fought for the Gods against them and brought them victory. I can do it quite easily. I shall make arrangements to accompany you even now. Permit me to do so,” he appealed.

Hearing these words, the sage¹⁷⁰ said, “Oh King! I am not satisfied in spite of all that you say. I assert once again, you

¹⁷⁰ Viswamitra sensed Dasaratha’s misgivings and severely reprimanded the Emperor, “You have no idea who your son is. He is the very incarnation of God. Do not consider Him to be your tender son! It is your attachment that is blinding you to the Absolute Reality that Rama is. Give up this bodily attachment and replace it with devotion.” Viswamitra sent for sage Vashishta [Dasaratha’s resident preceptor]. Vashishta said, “O Dasaratha, do you know why I am serving as a priest in your royal household? I am not here because I am enamoured by your wealth, fame, and power. I knew that God was going to take birth here in human form. I wanted to sanctify my life by having the *darshan* of that divine boy, spending time with Him, and experiencing bliss. That is the reason why I am here, and not for any worldly gains. Why do you entertain doubts about Rama? Send Him immediately with Sage Viswamitra to the

cannot accomplish this assignment. Can you not realise that it is beyond even me who is acclaimed as well-nigh omnipotent and omniscient? How then can you take up this task and succeed? You consider these boys just ordinary children. This is a mistake resulting from the affection you have as the father. I know full well that they are the Divine Might Itself in human Form. Do not hesitate. Keep your word so solemnly given and send them this very moment with me. Or else, accept that you are not true to your word. I shall depart. Do either of these, quickly! This is no occasion for wavering and delay!” The King was frightened by the sharpness of the sage’s voice. He was overwhelmed by fear. In despair, Dasaratha wanted that his preceptor be invited to court. Vashishta came in and on seeing Viswamitra; they exchanged smiles and words of mutual respect. Vashishta heard from the King an account of all that had happened. Of course, Vashishta knew quite well the Divine Reality of the boys; so, he decided to advise the King not to have the least worry, but entrust the boys gladly to the loving custody of the sage.

Dasaratha pleaded that the boys were not keeping good health for some months and that they did not have even the physical stamina to engage in battle with the demons. “We are concerned since long about their health and now this demand for them has come like a jab on a painful sore. My mind does not agree in the least to send them forth to encounter the demons. I shall guard my children even at the risk of my own life,” lamented the King.

forest.” With great reluctance, Dasaratha yielded to Vashishta’s command. (*SSB 2000 p.214-215*)

Viswamitra intervened and said, “King! Why do you foolishly lament in this manner? You should have desisted from making promises which you could not fulfil. It is an act of dark sin when a ruler makes a promise without considering the pros and cons and then, when he is asked to execute it, to delay, retract and even to go counter to the promise. This is most unworthy of kings like you. I spurn the help you offer, sorrowfully. Help rendered, however small, if it comes from the deeper urges of service welling in the heart is as good as the offer of life itself. Half-hearted and hesitating help, however great, is deplorable. I have no desire to cause pain and extract help from you. Well! Be happy with yourself and your sin, I am leaving.” Viswamitra rose and attempted to move off. The King fell at his feet and prayed for more light and more time. He asked that he may be taught his duty. He pleaded with the sage to convince him of the fairness of his demand, so that he could fulfil his plan. (*RKRK Part I p.81-87*)

The sage told the emperor, “O Dasaratha! I have decided to conduct a Yajna for the welfare of the world. But the demons pose many impediments to conduct of the Yajna. I have the power and strength to counter them, for I have powerful weapons at my command. But the austerities of the Yajna forbid me to use them when I am performing it. Violence and bloodshed are prohibited for rithwik performing the Yajna. I therefore seek the help of your sons to accompany me to protect the Yajna, which I am performing for the welfare and well- being of the world. (*SSB 2002 p.39-40*)

Viswamitra said to Dasaratha¹⁷¹, “Oh king! There is no power in this world that is not in me. I am endowed with all mighty powers and all type of knowledge. But once I undertake *Yajna deesksha* (vow of yajna) and start performing the ritual, I am not supposed to involve myself in any act of violence. This is the discipline prescribed for the one performing *yajna*. Hence, I cannot kill the demons on my own. That is why I am taking Rama with me.” (*SSS Vol.35 p.116*)

Divine Incarnations

*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*¹⁷², Viswamitra, the sage counselled him, saying, “Oh King, do not be deluded seeing physical forms of your sons. They are not ordinary mortals.” (*SSS Vol.36 Part II p.59*)

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 embodiments of Divinity. Send your sons with me without hesitation (*SSS Vol.25 p.181*)

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

¹⁷¹ See Chapter, *Dasaratha - VISWAMITRA IN AYODHYA*
Viswamitra said, “I shall bring them with me to you when the task for which I am taking them is accomplished”

¹⁷² *SSS Vol.25 p.181*

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. (*RKRV Part I p.88*)

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. They continued their journey, Viswamitra leading the way, Rama close behind him and Lakshmana bringing up the rear. (*RKRV Part I p.95*)

Taught Bala and Athibala Manthras – Maya is inescapable for anyone however great – was shackled by Maya¹⁷³

Soon they reached river Sarayu. The sun was preparing to set; so Viswamitra called Rama and Lakshmana near him and spoke to them soft and sweet words, “Darlings! Go to the river without further delay and have the ceremonial washing of hands and feet. I shall now impart to you two mystic formulae, (Mantra), which form the crown jewels of all Manthras. They are named Bala and Athi Bala¹⁷⁴ (strength and super strength). They are both charged

¹⁷³ This incident is a good lesson for the world, wherein Rama had come to revive Dharma. It is a lesson Rama taught by his behaviour, rather than by words. “Maya is inescapable for anyone however great. It will turn them upside down in a moment; it will not loosen its grasp so long as the victim is engrossed in the belief that he is the ‘body.’ (*RKRV Vol.1 p.97*)

¹⁷⁴ The sage taught them two mantras, “Bala” and “Athibala”, so that they would not suffer from sleeplessness and hunger. “Bala” conquers sleep; “Athibala” conquers hunger. Though Viswamitra knew that Rama was omnipotent yet he came under the spell of *Maya* and taught him the sacred mantras. (*SSB 2002p.45*)

with tremendous power. They will restore freshness to you, however exhausted you may be. They will prevent exhaustion however heavily you exert yourselves. They will not allow illness to approach you. They will save you from demonic forces. Again, whenever you are journeying, they will, if you recollect them, keep away hunger and thirst, bestow exhilarating health and shower joy and enthusiasm. They will strengthen limbs and minds. Rama! These two Manthras are supreme over all other Manthras. They are more effulgent and efficacious than the rest.” Viswamitra expatiated upon the potency of the Manthras for a long while¹⁷⁵. Rama had no need to be told of them. He listened with apparent surprise and with wonder-filled eyes. Lakshmana meanwhile, was watching both the Sage and Rama, laughing within himself!¹⁷⁶ (*RKRV Part I p. 96-97*)

Rama and Lakshmana chanted and consequently had no hunger, thirst or sleep during their stay in the Siddhashram. (*SSS Vol.35 p.116-117*)

He told them, “Do not identify yourself with physical body. You are the embodiments of the atma. You are *Chaitanyaswarupas*. You are endowed with divine power. Always bear in mind¹⁷⁷.. (*SSS Vol.36 Part II p.58-59*)

¹⁷⁵ After teaching the Mantras to the children, he regretted his audacity to teach Mantras to the very embodiments of Divinity! (*SSB 1996 p.24*)

¹⁷⁶ Knowing full well that Rama was the divine incarnation and had the power to protect the Yajna, why did Viswamitra teach these mantras (Bala and Athibala)? These are only external activities meant for the world. (*SSS Vol.35 p.116-117*)

¹⁷⁷ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Characteristic Of Rama - Standards Set For Everyone - I will do my work myself - All are servants in this*

Viswamitra had these two powerful Manthras in his control. He had accumulated a great store of spiritual treasure. He had realised, in spite of his own far-famed resources that Rama alone had the might needed to outwit and destroy the demonic hordes intent on disrupting the Yajna he was set on celebrating. He had counselled Dasaratha against over affection towards the son, blinding him to the divine majesty of Rama. He had announced that Rama was the guardian of the entire world. He believed that there was no height of heroism that Rama could not reach. Yet he was preparing to initiate those very princes into some mystic Manthras, as if they were children of common stock. Surely, Viswamitra was shackled by Maya¹⁷⁸! He had yielded to the delusion of judging by apparent attributes; Rama laid bare the strength of the stranglehold of Maya on the sage. For, it was He who had shrouded Viswamitra's mind and made him enter proudly upon these initiations rites! Rama and Lakshmana finished their ablutions in the river, as directed by Viswamitra. The sage came to Rama and initiated Him into the two Manthras. Rama pronounced the formulae after the teacher, and nodded his head as a novice should do, when a mantra is taught. Lakshmana

world.” All are one, be alike to everyone - Rama was pressing His own feet. Narada loudly exclaimed, “Oh Paramatma. What has happened? Why are You pressing Your feet? Viswamitra appeared on the scene immediately and told Narada that the secret of the incarnation of Rama must be kept carefully. He requested Narada not to bring about a catastrophe by announcing it openly. Viswamitra said that if this is done, the marriage of Sita will not take place and the destruction of Ravana will not come about. All the rishis who were really liberated people had no selfish motives. This kind of conduct on their part was intended to give happiness and prosperity to the people. (*SSB 1977 p.150*)

¹⁷⁸ See Endnotes - No. 5 - Maya

too did the same. They bowed their heads as if they had agreed to be the “disciples” of Viswamitra. Soon it became dark and the brothers arranged for themselves, as beds, the grass which grew thick on the ground. After they laid themselves down, Viswamitra sat by their side and related tales of olden times. Soon the boys appeared as if they had gone to sleep, as a result apparently of the exhaustion of tramping long distances on foot. Viswamitra stopped his story and was lost in thought about his own destiny and destination. (*RKRV Part I p.97-98*)

Importance of River Sarayu

A noise as of a rumbling subterranean flood sweeping over the land battered their ears. They saw the waters of the river raging and rising, with long chains of white foam on the crest of the waves. Rama asked the sage, “Master! Why is it that all of a sudden the angry flood has filled the basin and how could they surge so fast and so high?” The sage replied, “Rama! The full and furious Sarayu falls into the calm quiet Ganga at this place; hence this reverberation and this rumbling!” The sage uttered these words coolly and casually. It was a familiar scene for him. He continued, “Rama! In ages gone by, on one occasion, Brahma willed and a great lake was immediately formed near Mount Kailas. This is known as Manasa-sarovar; the word means the sarovar (lake) of Manasa (the mind). The gods named it so. When the snows melt and the rains fall, the lake gets overfull and the flow from out of the sarovar becomes the Sarayu River, running by the side of Ayodhya towards the Ganga. The Sarayu is a sacred river, because the waters rise from the lake willed by Brahma Himself.” (*RKRV Part I p.100-101*)

Kingdoms of Malada and Karosa; and Demoness Thataki:

They entered a thick dark forest. It aroused a sense of terror. Rama asked the Master, “No sign of man having ever traversed this forest is seen!” Before he could get the answer, an eerie succession of roars from the angry throats of a huge herd of animals—tigers, lions, leopards and a host of lesser wild life—captured their attention. It appeared as if the earth was being torn asunder! They also saw wild animals engaged in mortal fight with others, some running into thickets, away from the scene of violent death. The forest was the home of close-grown trees that reached the skies and spread their shades thick over the ground—the banyan, the deodar, the pine, the holy fig.

There was no path to guide the feet. They had to clear a track for progress. Lakshmana could not contain his curiosity; he asked Viswamitra, “Master! Who rules this fearful forest? What is its name?” The Master replied, “Lakshmana! Where this jungle has grown, there were formerly two little kingdoms, Malada and Karosa. They shone like the region of the gods. In fact, people spoke of the area as having been specially created and fostered by the gods. They relate a story about the place. When the God Indra killed Vritra, He suffered the contamination of sin and as a consequence, he was stricken with insatiable pain of hunger. Indra was brought in that pathetic condition by the sages to this region, and given a bath in the holy Ganga. After that immersion, they poured on His Head pots and pots of Ganga water, uttering all the while, holy hymns and formulae. With that, the sin (of killing a person of high caste) was washed away.

“Brahma was delighted that the contamination (Mala) as well as the cry (Krosa) of hunger ended. So, He named these kingdoms as Malada and Karosa. The kingdoms, too, rose to fame with his blessing. The gods willed that the two areas be resplendent with grain and gold, and all means of plenty and prosperity.

“Meanwhile, a cruel ogress named Thataki¹⁷⁹ appeared in this region and she started laying waste the rich and peaceful land. She reduced these two wealthy valleys Malada and Karosa into this dreaded wilderness. Out of fear the cultivators of its fertile fields fled in terror at her approach and so the jungle crept on and on. The thickly populated cities and villages were deserted and ruined, leaving no trace of human habitation. She could not be captured or destroyed, for, she could escape from all attempts to destroy her. No one has yet dared to put an end to her depredations. I cannot think of anyone except you (yes, my deepest intuition says so), no one except you can destroy this monster possessing such overwhelming might.”

The words of Viswamitra moved the feelings of Rama. He could not contain within himself the anger that surged up. With great humility and reverence, he said, “Oh great among ascetics! I have heard that the Yakshas are of poor might. Besides, this Thataki is a female; hers is the weaker sex. How could she terrorise entire populations so? Wherefrom did she acquire all this power? How could she reduce this region to rack and ruin when it has been blessed by Brahma and the Gods? This is

¹⁷⁹ See Chapter, *Thataki - Thataki and Maricha ruin the wealthy little kingdoms - Malada and Karosa:*

indeed astounding. It is something that is beyond the bounds of belief.” (*RKRV Part I p.101-104*)

Viswamitra gave an interesting story in this context. He described the story of Suketa who was a *yaksha*, who was praying to the Lord because he had no children. As a result of this, he was blessed with a very strong daughter by name Thataki, the *rakshasi*. This Thataki married a person by name Sangalu, and after the marriage she had two sons by name Subahu and Maricha. After some years, the husband died. Unable to bear the death of her husband, Sangalu, she became very much excited; and in great passion she developed anger; and with the help of her two sons, she has been all the time giving pain and trouble to the *rishis*. Realising this anger and bad conduct on the part of this woman, Agasthya cursed her and said that she will thereafter conduct herself as a *rakshasi*. Viswamitra narrated this story and said that originally she was a *yakshini*; but as a result of the curse of Agasthya, she became a *rakshasi*. Now she can exercise her will over human beings. After telling Rama about this power of the *yakshini*, he took Him to Mithilapura. (*SSB 1977 p.147*)

Viswamitra was happy that Rama put these qualms dictated by Dharma¹⁸⁰. “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. You have incarnated in human

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter, *Thataki – Rama questions the propriety to kill a woman and Viswamitra elaborates on Rama’s manifestation*

form to destroy the Rakshasa brood. This is your mission, your task. You have to carry it out today and throughout your career. *(RKR Part I p.105-106)*

Rama to carry out any act to foster Dharma:

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: “.....When such as you declare that Thataki can be killed¹⁸¹ 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.” So saying, he held the bow in his hand, and tested the tightness of the string, producing a sound that echoed and re-echoed from the ten directions. The entire jungle was awakened. Wild animals fled far and wide.

Thataki was shocked by the unusually loud and awesome sound. was rushing towards Rama with outstretched arms, so that she could grasp him and put him into her mouth like a piece of cake! So, he drew his bow and shot an arrow at the body of the invisible Thataki identifying where exactly it was at the time. At this, she rushed once again at Rama. Her two arms were cut down by his arrows. She fell on the ground, crying in agony and pain. Lakshmana cut off her limbs, one by one. But, Thataki could adopt form after form, as she liked. So, she gave up one form and assumed another quickly and reappeared fresh and furious before them! Thataki shrieked most

¹⁸¹ See Chapter, *Thataki* - No sin when the act is done for the promotion of Dharma

ferociously, and putting out her terrible tongue, attempted to fall upon Rama and Lakshmana and crush them under her weight. On this, Rama decided that delay will invite worse consequences. He shot a fatally sharp arrow right into the chest. With that, she rolled on the ground and gave up her life¹⁸². **(RKRV Part I p.108-110)**

When the awful demoness fell dead, Viswamitra called Rama near, and stroking his hair lovingly, said, “Son, were you afraid? No! No! How can the saviour of all the worlds be afraid? This feat is the foundation stone. It ensures the stability of the mansion. Come, you are tired. The sun too has set. Perform the evening worship and rest awhile. Come with me.” He took them to the river, and later, he told them, “Children! We shall rest here for the night and we can proceed to our hermitage at dawn.” They spent the night listening to the stories that Viswamitra related. The Master also revealed to them their own faculties and latent majesty. **(RKRV Part I p.111-112)**

Viswamitra surrenders his Divine weapons and missiles to Rama¹⁸³:

The sage..... spoke soft and sweet words “Rama! I am delighted at your heroism! When you were overcoming that demoness Thataki, I comprehended the truth of your being the Absolute. Really, I am very fortunate.” Viswamitra shed tears of joy. He held forth all the mystic weapons he possessed, and the

¹⁸² See Chapter, *Thataki – Thataki killed*

¹⁸³ Viswamitra never cared for the great weapons in his house. He knew Narayana was born in Dasaratha’s house. **(SSB 1977 p 128)**

Manthras which shape and sustain them, and in a swift act of dedication he placed them all in the hands of Rama. “I have no authority to wield these weapons. Of what avail are they for me even if I have them in my possession? You are the master and wielder of all weapons. They too will be most pleased when they are with you for they can fulfil their destiny best while with you. Note this! From this moment, all the weapons I commanded so far shall be your instruments, available for the mission on which you have come,” he said, pouring holy water with appropriate Manthras, indicative of an irrevocable surrender of their ownership.

Thus, he offered to Rama the *Dandachakra* (stick), the *Dharmachakra*, the *Kalachakra*, the *Indrastra*, the *Vajrastra*, the Siva-inspired *Trisula*, *Brahmasirastra*, *Aishikastra* and the most mighty and destructive of all, the *Brahmastra*. Then, he sat silent for a while, with eyes closed. He rose with the words, “Now, what have I to do with these two?” And he gave Rama two powerful maces, *Modak* and *Sikhar*. He said, “After reaching our Ashram, I shall bring out other weapons too—the Agni missile, (*Agniastra*), the *Krauncha* missile, the *Narayana* missile, the *Vayu* missile and others.” “Son,” he said, “All these weapons are at the beck and call of the master; they are amazingly overpowering.” Thus saying, he whispered into Rama’s ear the mystic formulae which can materialise and activate them, and direct them towards the targets with incalculable fury. He asked him to recite the formulae under his supervision. Before long, Rama was able to visualise the deities presiding over each of the divine missiles and weapons and receive their grateful homage.

Each deity presented itself before Rama and fell prostrate before him. Each one said, “Rama! We are your servants from this moment. We all vow and affirm that we shall abide by your commands.” Then they disappeared, awaiting further summons.

Rama was glad at this development. He touched the Sage’s feet, saying, “Master, your heart is the treasure chest of renunciation. You are, I realise, the Divine embodiment of Thyaga (detachment) and Yoga (conquest of the senses). Or will anyone else renounce and gift away such an array of potent hard-won weapons? Master! Please delight me by counselling the manner in which I can withdraw the weapons after they have wrought the intended havoc. You have now taught me the formulae for unleashing them. I desire to know how I can recover them.” At this, Viswamitra felt elated. He said: “These forces and weapons like Sathyakeerti, Drshta, Rabhasa, Pitsomasa, Krsana, Virasya, Yougandha, Vidhootha, and Karaveeraka Jrmbhaka— are automatically recoverable by the exercise of the will of the bowman using them, expressed through Manthras, which I shall communicate to you now.” He then initiated him into those formulae also. When they were pronounced, the deities so propitiated appeared and prostrated to their new Master. Rama told them that they have to be ready when called and that they could meanwhile be at ease.

Viswamitra then proposed to resume the journey and the three of them started footing their way along. (*RKRV Part I p.111-113*)

Siddhashram, the Hermitage of Achievement:

A little distance later, they entered a region of high-peaked hills. Their eyes fell on a charming garden, the fragrance of which welcomed them and refreshed their bodies and minds. The brothers were curious to know who owned that lovely spot. They asked the Sage to enlighten them. Viswamitra replied, “Son, this is the holy area which the gods choose when they come down on earth to practise austerity for the success of their desires. The great Kasyapa did penance here and won his goal. The place confers victory on all holy efforts. So it is named, Siddhashram¹⁸⁴, the Hermitage of Achievement! I have myself taken residence here, with the intention of cultivating Dedication and Surrender. This hermitage is the target of attack for demons who intercept and befoul every holy rite done here. You have to destroy them when they attempt their nefarious tactics.” So saying, Viswamitra entered that heart-warming seat of peace. He placed his arm on Rama’s shoulder caressingly and said, “This Ashram is as much yours from today, as it was mine until now.”

¹⁸⁴ Vamana belonged to the famous Siddhashram which was founded by *Kasyapa* (representing *Purusha* or man) and *Adhithi* (representing the feminine *prakriti* or Nature). It is through the union of this *Purusha* and *Prakruthi* that the progeny known as *Siddhi* (in the form of *Vatu*), the embodiment of *Vishnu Thathwa*, was born. The Siddhashram was located on the banks of a sacred river called Pavithra, which represents life. *Siddhi* will always be found on the banks of flowing life whenever the *bhava shuddhi* (purity of mind) and *Chitta shuddhi* (purity of heart) predominate in man. It is due to the fact that all *sankalpas* (resolutions) could be realised at this sacred *ashram* that it has come to be known as Siddhashram. Viswamitra, after the successful completion of his *yaga* with the help of Rama and Lakshmana, brought them to reside at this *ashram* for some time. It was at this *ashram*, too, that Bali attained *moksha* (liberation). (SSS Vol.14 p.188-189)

The hoary sage shed tears of gratification as he uttered those words. Even as they stepped into the Siddhashram, the residents ran forward with eager haste to wash the feet of the Master and offer water for ablutions to Rama and Lakshmana.

They scattered flowers along the path towards the Ashram and led them to the door. They offered them fruits and sweet cool drink. They proposed to Rama and Lakshmana that they should take rest in a cottage specially allotted to them and made ready for their use. They did accordingly and after the rest, which refreshed them a great deal, they washed their feet and faces and came to the Sage. (*RKRV Part I p.113-114*)

Meaning of Siddhashram and Yajna

In Tretha Yuga, Viswamitra took the help of Rama to ensure the conduct of the Yajna without hindrance from the demonic forces. His Ashram was called Siddhashram. Actually the heart of every human being is a Siddhashram. The moment evil thoughts or bad feelings arise in man that is the beginning of all sins. When the heart is polluted with such sinful thoughts, one should seek the help of Atma Rama, just as Viswamitra sought the help of Rama to put an end to the ogress Thataki. If you think of God and pray to Him with sincere devotion, every deed done by you will be a Yajna. The mind is the altar of this Yajna. You must offer all the evil qualities at the altar of the mind.

That is the ideal, internal Yajna to be performed by every person as distinct from the external Yajna done ritualistically. (*SSS Vol.26 p.355*)

The Yagna at Siddhashram and the destruction of Maricha and Subahu

(*Rama and Lakshmana*) stood before the Teacher with arms folded and said, “Master! Can Yajna which you have willed to perform be inaugurated tomorrow?” Viswamitra was elated at this query. He replied “Yes! Everything is ready! In this Siddhashram, it is so always. There is no need to wait for preparations to be completed. We are always ready. I shall take the prescribed vow, when dawn breaks tomorrow.” The news spread and everyone set about the task of collecting all that was necessary for the great event. Dawn broke. (*RKRV Part I p.115*)

Viswamitra explained to Rama and Lakshmana, “Sons! This is our Siddhashram. Lord Vamana was born here. Lord Shiva resided here for a few days. ...Sons! You have come here to protect a Yajna. You should undertake that responsibility. This was the command of your father. From this moment onwards you are expected to desist from eating and resting. This itself is a big Yajna that you should perform. You should sanctify it and emerge successful.” Rama and Lakshmana were equal to the task. They never displayed any tiredness, difficulty or weakness. (*SSB 2002 p.69-70*)

Viswamitra took the vow of initiation and the Yajna began. *The instant the mantras were uttered, Rama and Lakshmana went into high alert and patrolled the place.*¹⁸⁵ As Skanda and Visakha stood guard for the Gods, the two brothers, Rama and

¹⁸⁵ *SSB 2002 p.69-70*

Lakshmana stood resolutely determined to encounter all who attempted to interfere with its due performance. Since it was improper to speak to Viswamitra who was engaged in the sacrificial ceremony, Rama gestured to the other participants to find out from them when the demon horde could be expected and from which direction. They could only answer, “It is not possible to say when and from where!” “The demons have no regular timings. Any moment they might pounce on us. Who can predict the time of their onslaught?” The hermits spoke to Rama about the demons, each according to his estimate of their character and habits.

Rama was delighted at the replies given by them. He decided that the wise course would be to be ever vigilant and ready to beat back the demon forces, who attempt to frustrate the sacred ceremonies of hermits. He alerted his brother too. They watched the four quarters very carefully and paid attention to the slightest sound indicative of the approach of danger. Recognising their bravery and earnestness, the ascetics derived vast joy and wonder, for; they were of tender age and lovely complexion, barely out of the stage of boyish pranks!

For five days and nights, the brothers kept unremitting guard over the sacrificial site and the hermitage without a wink of sleep or a moment of rest. The sixth day too started on the same routine. Viswamitra was engaged in the Yajna, immersed in the ritual exactitude of each item of the ceremony. The *Rithwiks* (reciters of hymns and other participants) were engaged in their tasks of recitation, oblations, and recitation.

Suddenly, they were astounded by a thunderous noise that broke from the sky, as if the firmament itself was exploding into fragments! Fire emanated from everything on the sacrificial platform—the kusa grass, the plates and cups, the holy vessels holding ritual objects, the dry sticks which had to be offered in the holy Yajna fire, the flowers, the *kumkum* and other auspicious articles collected for the sake of worshipping gods! The flames rose on all sides!

Very soon, the sky was overcast by dark fearsome clouds and the bright day became a night of pitch darkness. Mysterious evil fumes spread fast towards the place where the Yajna was being performed! The sinister clouds started raining blood, and the drops when they fell were welcomed by tongues of flame which rose to receive them! (*RKRV Part I p.115-116*)

A huge roar could be heard. One of the sages told the brothers, “There comes the demon hordes. They are being led by Maricha and Subahu. Be ready.” Rama and Lakshmana were without food or water or sleep.... (*SSB 2002 p.69-70*)

Like Thataki, Maricha and Subahu, sons of Thataki, also rained fire, blood and stones on Siddhashram. (*SSB 1996 p.25*)

Rama and Lakshmana sought to locate the enemy demons amidst the phantasmagoria of cruelty and hate. Rama, through His Divine Vision, knew where the leading ogres, Maricha and Subahu were, and he released the Manasa arrow in that direction. It struck the breast of Maricha, and stopped any further mischief

from him. Next he shot the Agniastra (Fire weapon) at Subahu and it got lodged in the heart of Subahu. Rama understood that if their corpses dropped on the holy region the hermitage itself will be polluted. So to prevent that sinful contact, the arrows of Rama carried the vicious bodies hundreds of miles afar and cast them into the ocean! Maricha and Subahu shrieked and groaned in unbearable agony and struggled desperately amidst the waves; but they did not die. (*RKRV Part I p.117*)

Rama followed this up by launching the Vayu Astra on the followers of Subahu who then melted into thin air instantaneously.¹⁸⁶

The other leaders of the demon hordes fled for their lives beyond the horizon. Lakshmana said that it was not advisable to allow any demon to survive however cowardly they might appear, for, they would soon return to their wicked practices. So, he prompted Rama to kill off the entire gang. The hermits who watched this great act of heroism were elated with admiration. They believed that the brothers were really Siva Himself, in His terror-striking boon-conferring Form. They bowed in reverence to them, in their own minds—for, they were too young to accept their homage.

The forest put on the vesture of brightness and joy, in a moment. Amidst all the distractions, Viswamitra continued steadily and without interruption the meditation on the deities and the recitation of the holy hymns that were enjoined for the Yajna! He

¹⁸⁶ *SSB 1996 p.25*

never made even the slightest movement of body or mind; such was the depth of his concentration. The Valedictory Offering in the Sacred Fire was fulfilled with correctitude and thankfulness. Then, Viswamitra came smiling to where Rama and Lakshmana were standing. “Oh praise-worthy heroes! You brought victory to my vow! Through you, I have realised my life’s desire. The name of this Ashram has been justified. It has become truly the Hermitage of Achievement!” he said. The sage shed tears of joy. He fondled and caressed the boys. He proceeded towards the hermitage with his hands placed on the shoulders of Rama and Lakshmana. There, he gave them the share of the holy offerings made at the sacrificial fire. He asked them to retire and refresh themselves with a little rest.

Though the fulfilment of the purpose for which they had been brought was itself the most effective restorative for their limbs and minds, they felt that it would be improper to discard the command of the Master. So, they retired and slept soundly a long while. The Master removed himself to another thatched cottage, to ensure undisturbed sleep for them. He also instructed some men to keep guard so that no one unwittingly created noise which might awaken them. While the brothers were sleeping, Viswamitra was exalting over the successful conclusion of the Yajna and the Divine Prowess of Rama and Lakshmana. Meanwhile, Rama and Lakshmana woke up and after washing face, hands and feet; they came out through the door, to find there the boys of the hermit families keeping guard, lest their sleep be disturbed! They were informed that the Master was conversing with the ascetics in another cottage. So, they moved

thither and fell at the sage's feet. Rising, they stood with arms folded and said, "Great teacher! If these servants of yours have to do any other task, please inform us and we shall gladly carry it out." At this, one ascetic from the group stood up and addressed them thus, "With the destruction of the demons, all that has to be done has been accomplished. What else is there to be done? The desire entertained by the Master, since years, has been fulfilled. Nothing higher than this is needed. You two are of the form of Siva-Sakthi. That is how you appear to our eyes. You are no common mortals. It is our good fortune that has given us this chance to see you. Our gratitude knows no bounds." At this, the residents touched the feet of Rama and Lakshmana. (*RKRV Part I p.117-119*)

Story of how the Bow of Shiva reached Emperor Janaka:

Viswamitra read that Emperor Janaka of Mithila had resolved to perform a celebrated Yajna, expressive of the highest glory of Righteousness, and that he was praying *Viswamitra* to give him joy by his gracious Presence with his disciples. (*RKRV Part I p.120*)

General permission from Dasaratha to act according to *Viswamitra*'s directions, Rama and Lakshmana followed Him to Mithila

Meanwhile, one young student-disciple ran in with a bundle of palm leaf scripts and placed it in the hands of *Viswamitra*. He turned over a few leaves and passed it on to a reverend old hermit sitting by his side. The Master asked the old man to read it aloud, so that all might hear.

He read that Emperor Janaka of Mithila had resolved to perform a celebrated Yajna, expressive of the highest glory of Righteousness, and that he was praying Viswamitra to give him joy by his gracious Presence with his disciples.

When they heard this, all exclaimed, “*Subham, Subham.*” (May it attain fulfilment). Viswamitra said, “Sons! Now that we can travel through the forests free from fear of demonic gangs, I have decided to start on the journey to Mithila with all the residents of the Ashram tomorrow itself.” When he heard this, Rama said, “Master! It is really a source of delight. Since there is nothing more that you need us for, we shall return to Ayodhya if you permit us to do so. Please allow us to leave.” At this, 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 not enough time for me to take you to Ayodhya and then reach Mithila on the day the Yajna begins. If you two accompany me to Mithila, you can witness the Yajna and proceed to Ayodhya with me from there itself.” Hearing these words which had no trace of hesitation or doubt, Rama too answered decisively, without weighing pros and cons, “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 the prayer?” 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?”

At this Viswamitra said, “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 command by even the width of a grain.’ He told me, ‘Master, you must yourself assume full responsibility for my children; you must yourself bring them back to me.’ You have listened to what he said when we left Ayodhya. So, follow my word now. Come with me to Mithila, and from there we shall go to Ayodhya, I and you and all my disciples.” Rama realised the truth that was inherent in this plan and he nodded in agreement saying, “We shall do as you desire.” Instructions went forth that everyone must get ready before daybreak for the journey to Mithila. Viswamitra rose early and led the boys to the river for ablutions. He was thrilled at the chance of telling them of the hardships he encountered from the demons whenever he attempted to celebrate Yajnas in the past. He related to them how all his counter-measures failed to achieve their object. He expressed his gratitude for the destruction of the demons which had ensured safety for the hermitage as well as the surrounding regions. He described how the people were now happily relieved of fear and have unalloyed peace and joy.

The place was silent, calm, comforting. Sitting on the soft sands the sage Viswamitra was relating the special features and significance of the Yajna contemplated by Emperor Janaka, to the two brothers he had drawn close to him. During the description he referred to a precious bow that Janaka had in his

possession, a bow that was uniquely potent, and shone with rare splendour. He declared that they must not miss seeing it. At this, Rama asked how the bow happened to reach Janaka and Viswamitra answered. “Listen son! Years ago, the Emperor of Mithila named Devaratha celebrated a great Yajna the like of which no mortal could dare to perform, a Yajna which can confer vast spiritual benefits, a Yajna which pleased the Gods so highly that they gifted him this divine bow, as a mark of appreciation. It is the Bow of Siva. It is being worshipped with due rites by Janaka every day. He offers flowers and sandal paste, and waves camphor flame and incense in its honour. He places eatables and fruits before the Divine Presence in the bow, in reverential homage. The bow is so loaded with divinity that no one can raise it and string it, be he god, demon, angel or spirit. Many princes who attempted to string it have met with disgraceful disappointment. Rama! You are worthy heroes. You can examine it. During this coming Yajna, the Bow will most probably be on show; so, this is a good chance, certainly.” Viswamitra went on describing the wonderful potency of the bow. Lakshmana turned his eyes as if searching for the direction in which Mithila was. Meanwhile Rama said, with delight “Certainly! We must see it. We shall come with you tomorrow.” Hearing this, Viswamitra was elated. Darkness fell and everyone rose and moved towards Siddhashram.

Viswamitra’s farewell to Siddhashram –Prostrated on the ground as a mark of respect for the forest deities

Viswamitra called together the residents of the Ashram and ordered that they should get ready to leave for Mithila as soon as

the hour of dawn struck. Then, some of them asked, “Master! How can the routine of the Ashram be observed without interruption if there is none left here?”

The sage replied, “If each one carries on his duties wherever he is, that itself is the proper observance of the Ashram routine. There is no special routine for the Ashram apart from the Asramites. Those who seek *Asraya* (support) make up the Ashram; without the *Asrithas* (dependants) there can be no Ashram. When the *Asrithas* are with me, why worry about the Ashram and the routine? The disciples are those to be cared for, those that have to observe the disciplines. Moreover, since the place has now become free from the fear of demons, the Ashram cannot come to harm. The Creator of All is our *Asrayam* (Refuge) and when we depend on Him, He will foster all.” Viswamitra spoke in this rather unfamiliar strain and continued, “Take with you the things needed for your daily rites as well as all the tools and vessels belonging to the Ashram. There is no need to leave anything here.”

Some noviciates queried, “Master! After what interval of time do we return to this place? If you tell us that, we can select as many articles as will suffice for that period of absence; why burden ourselves with more than what is essential?”

Viswamitra replied, “Time is no servant of the body; the body is the servant of Time. Therefore, one can never say when! Will I come here again or no? I doubt!” When they heard this the hearts of all the residents suffered a shock. The clothes, vessels and

tools they held in their hands slipped and fell on the ground. They could not find words to speak in reply. They could not protest, nor could they muster courage to question the Master. So, they bundled up Kusa grass, sacred sticks for the sacrificial fire, ceremonial ladles and vessels, as much as they could carry. The meaning of Viswamitra's words was a mystery and so each of them interpreted them in his own way.

The night rolled by and dawn broke. Everyone was ready; when the doors were being closed and bolted behind them Viswamitra said, "Do not fasten the doors! Leave them open. This is not ours, anyone who comes can enter. This Ashram must welcome all who arrive at all times. This day, the bond between us and this Ashram has snapped. Grow in happiness hereafter, ye patron gods of this holy area. I have achieved success in my endeavour; accept my grateful appreciation in return. You will no more be troubled by demon hordes. You can now live in peace, with ample progeny, prosperous and happy. I am going out of the Siddhashram, renouncing it. I have resolved to take residence in the region of the Himalayas, lying north of the sacred Ganga River." Viswamitra prostrated on the ground as a mark of respect for the forest deities.

Then, he started on his journey, with Rama and Lakshmana and the senior monks of the Ashram. The residents of the hermitage realised that their place was where Viswamitra was, and not the forest or huts where they had lived so long. They felt that the Himalayan region was equally suitable for them. So, they too offered gratitude and reverence to the forest deities and the grass-

thatched dwellings and walked on behind the sage. While they were thus proceeding in the northerly direction, they saw behind them, following their trail, thousands of deer, peacocks, birds and beasts of the jungle, running with raised tails, in eager haste of yearning. Viswamitra stopped and turning towards them he said, “Oh denizens of the jungle! The places to which I am going are not congenial for your style of living, for your safety and security. This forest is your natural habitat. Do not be sad at the separation. Do not follow us; remain here itself. God will grant you peace and joy.” He took leave of them too, before he resumed the journey.

They neared a City, by evening. The sage pointed to the City from a distance. (*RKRV Part I p.121-127, 155*)

Mithila:

That is Mithila¹⁸⁷, that vast concourse of magnificent buildings!” At this, the brothers as well as the disciples of the sage jumped with joy. They could not contain their happiness. From that spot, they walked faster. Forgetful of physical exhaustion, they quickly reached the main entrance of the City.

Wherever they turned, they saw ascetics and Brahmins engaged in the recitation of the Vedas. They saw many houses where sacrificial fires were fed with ritual offerings. Under every tree sheltering in its shade, were groups of people around the bullock

¹⁸⁷ Mithila: Country of ancient Bharatha, ruled by King Janaka, on the north-eastern side of India; Sita's childhood home (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

carts which had brought them from the country side. There were men and women, old and young, with children belonging to all castes and professions, persons, from all stages of life assembled at every corner. It was like moving in a stream of joy. The City was packed with eager people moving criss-cross on all the roads. The sage and his followers reached the embankment of a tank which was comparatively less crowded; for, they had to decide where they were to stay, and they were not yet quite sure where. The time for evening ablutions had drawn near, and so, they kept their belongings on the bank, took their bath and finished the rites prescribed.

Janaka eagerly awaits the arrival of Sage Viswamitra:

When the messenger hurried straight to the palace and told the Emperor Janaka that the Sage Viswamitra had arrived, he made arrangements appropriate for the reception of the great Sage and sent the chief Brahmins, Priests and Pundits of the Court under their leader, Sathananda to where Viswamitra was.

The group from the palace approached the embankment reciting Vedic hymns of welcome and good wishes, and Viswamitra realised that they were coming to take them to the Emperor's presence. He directed Rama and Lakshmana to prepare themselves for proceeding with him. Everyone made himself ready. Meanwhile, Sathananda honoured Viswamitra in true Vedic tradition, as befitted a great Master. He fell at his feet; he offered refreshments consecrated with Vedic formulae and announced with exemplary humility that he had come with others, under orders from the Emperor to accord him and all

those who were with him, the most sincere welcome. They left a palanquin at the place to bring the bags and baggage of the party and took the Sage and others into the City preceded by bands of musicians, playing on their instruments.

As soon as they entered the Royal Road, Emperor Janaka himself moved towards them accompanied by Ministers and courtiers and his nearest kinsmen. Janaka ¹⁸⁸ fell prostrate before Viswamitra saying, “Lord! I have realised today my greatest ambition. Mithila has acquired, with your arrival, a unique splendour.” He then enquired about the welfare of the Sage, his pupils and disciples.

Viswamitra’s arrival at Mithila was an immeasurable strength to Janaka¹⁸⁹

They walked on towards the quarters set apart for Viswamitra and his entourage. It was a pretty little new temple-like structure situated in the centre of a lovely garden. It was tastefully decorated with greens and festoons. The place was heavy with silence. It was as if peace fell in heavy showers there from the wings of Grace from heaven itself. It was quite adjacent to the Royal Palace. Therefore, after showing them in, Janaka fell at the feet of the sage again, saying: “Your arrival has added unto me immeasurable strength and joy. I am sure this fortune came to me as a result of the merit earned in many lives. I shall now take leave. For the Yajna to begin, there is an interval of twelve days,

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter *Janaka – Viswamitra Along With Rama and Lakshmana In Mithila*

¹⁸⁹ See Chapter, *Janaka – WINNING SITA*

according to the Rithwiks. Please therefore stay on in this Mithila city itself and bless me.” Viswamitra assured him that he had no objection to his proposal, and removed all apprehensions on that score from the mind of Janaka.

Janaka entered with the auspicious sandal paste and rice grains in his hands, while Sathananda and the entourage entered the sacred residence. With the delight of gratitude he washed the feet of the sage.

Then, Janaka fell at the feet of Viswamitra and stood by the side of the high seat that had been placed in front of the pedestal for the sage. As soon as Viswamitra directed him, Janaka occupied his own seat. Rama and Lakshmana sat on the carpet laid to the right of their Master. Viswamitra said, “Last night, since there was no time I could not tell you in detail. I shall tell now about these princes, since you desired to hear their story. If you have no leisure now, I can tell you some other time.” Janaka exclaimed, Master! What more important work have I than experiencing the ecstasy of conversing with you? This chance can be the fruit only of age – long austerity. I am filled with Ananda at the expectation that you will tell me about them. I consider it a great good fortune.”

Then, Viswamitra narrated the incidents that had taken place from his appearance at the court of Dasaratha, up to the Yajna and the heroic way in which the young boys had stood guard and foiled the attempts of the demons to desecrate the rituals.....The stories related by the sage to the brothers were

also explained to Janaka..... When the story of the purification and liberation of Ahalya, the Consort of Sage Gautama at the hermitage, which was near the Capital City, was related, Sathananda was surprised beyond measure.... Streams of tears of gratitude and joy fell down his cheeks he became so overcome with emotion that he was unable to move¹⁹⁰. (*RKR V Part I p.159-162*)

VISWAMITRA DEPARTS

The day after the wedding, Viswamitra went to Dasaratha and told him that the mission upon which he had resolved had been fulfilled. He called the brothers close to him, he fondled them very affectionately. He blessed them profusely, and turning to Dasaratha, expressed his intention to proceed to the Himalayan regions. At this, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna fell at the sage's feet. Viswamitra then went to the palace of Janaka and told him also that his desire had fructified triumphantly! He blessed Janaka, and the brides, Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Sruthakeerthi. He announced there too that he was proceeding to the Himalayas. Dasaratha and Janaka and many others of Ayodhya and Mithila were in a fix. They could neither let the Sage depart, nor persuade him to stay. At last, they laid at his feet their load of gratitude and took the dust of his feet when he left, blessing everyone. (*RKR V Part I p.191*)

While they were busily engaged thus, Viswamitra came close and said: "Oh Rama and Lakshmana! I am bestowing on you my

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter, *Ahalya* - Viswamitra's narrates at Mithila, the purification and liberation of Ahalya; Sathananda's gratitude

last blessing, for, I am going to the Himalayas right now. The mission on which I came to the world is already fulfilled. I was waiting to see marriage between *Prakriti* and *Paramatma*¹⁹¹. I have been instrumental in bringing about this marriage of Lord Narayana and Lakshmi. It is high time I shed the body; That is why I am going to Himalayas.” On hearing these words of Viswamitra, everyone felt sad and stunned. Viswamitra thus played the pivotal role in the early part of Ramayana. Before departure, Viswamitra gave away all powerful weapons to Rama and said: “You are the original source of weapons. I am returning them to You. The welfare and the well-being of the world rests with You. That is why I am delivering these weapons into Your hands.” Shedding profuse tears, Dasaratha said: “Sage Viswamitra, I cannot forget the good that you have done to my Son. I shall be ever grateful to you.” Viswamitra received the salutations of all the people there, consoled the crying ones, and went Himalayas. After this incident, there is no mention of Viswamitra anywhere in Ramayana. (*SSB 1996 p.34*)

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

¹⁹¹ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Swayamvara – Winning Sita - Prakruthi Marries Paramatma - Marriage between Prakriti and Paramatma:*

Viswamitra understood the meaning of Turiya state - If you take out fullness out of a full thing, what remains is also full (*SSB 1977 p. 144-145*)

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. (*SSB 1977 p.16*)

GAYATRI MANTRA

Viswamitra handed over Gayatri Mantra to posterity

Viswamitra was able to hand down the potent Gayatri Mantra to posterity. His name means “Friend for All”, “Well-wisher for the world. It was the Gayatri that entitled him to earn that name. Rig Veda is entirely the product of the insight of such sages. Every name you use for God, every illustration we imagine of His Glory, is in the Rig Veda. Rama, Krishna, Sai, Iswara, are all the very essence of the glory it describes, though you may not recognise the sources. Mantra means “words that save those who meditate on them.” So, whatever is uttered with such intention becomes holy, charged with love for the fellow – men, for the world, for the elements (*SSS Vol.15 p.270*)

Powers of the Gayatri Mantra:

Sage Viswamitra discovered the mantra named Gayatri, which is addressed to the energy of the Sun, Surya. This mantra has infinite potentiality. It is a vibrant formula. It has immense powers, powers that are truly amazing. For, the Sun is its presiding deity. Students of Ramayana know that the same sage, Viswamitra initiated Rama into the mysteries of Sun-worship, through the mantra, Aditya Hridayam. The Gayatri enabled Viswamitra to use rare weapons, which bowed to his will when

the mantra was repeated with faith. Through the powers he attained, in this way, Viswamitra was able to become a great scientist and create a counterpart of this cosmos. A person who is able to increase the capabilities of his hands and his senses " is now considered a 'scientist' but, the term (*Vijnani*) was correctly applied in the past only to those who developed spiritual power and discovered the formulae for delving into, the Divine within, those Imbued with faith and devotion who could spontaneously demonstrate that power in actual day to day living. On the other hand, the 'scientists' of today know only a bit here and a bit there; they exaggerate and boast of what they have managed to learn. They are fond of pomp and proud display. They rise sky high on the fumes of praise. Such absurdities are quite contrary to the true behaviour of a scientist. For he is humble and meek. He is aware that, however much he knows, there is a vaster field which he has yet to know. He is conscious that Divine Grace is responsible for what little he knows.

Viswamitra was a scientist who had recognised truth. So, there is no scientist yet greater than he was. But, though a sage of such immense eminence and with so expansive a heart lived in India, he is not remembered by the people of this land. They honour the foreigners who have glimpsed his greatness; they have placed their faith in those researchers who have elicited valuable lessons from the Veda. The Veda is the Mother of Bharat. But the children do not revere the mother any more. They revere the stepmother and believe in her! This is the result of anglicised educational system. (*Sathya Sai Vahini p.183-185*)



gayatri3x.mp3



Figure 18: Mother Gayatri at Prasanthi Nilayam

With the power of mantras taught to them by Sage Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshmana annihilated the rakshasas

The mantras contained in the Vedas are of immense significance. When Sage Viswamitra realised that the rakshasas (demon) wanted to stop the chanting of Vedic Mantras and destroy righteous and truth on earth, he sought the help of Rama and Lakshmana who symbolised 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 chanting of the mantras, the people of Treta Yuga annihilated their demonic qualities. Symbolising the divine powers of Vedas, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna destroyed demonic forces and fostered divine forces in the world. (SSS Vol.37 p.99)

Gayatri mantra is addressed to the energy of the Sun, the Surya.

The Gayatri mantra has something to do with intelligence. It has nothing to do with religious activity. We say, “*Dhiyo yonah prachodayath*”, and this portion of Gayatri means, “Blossom my intelligence, give importance to my intelligence, remove darkness of ignorance and let the *prajna* in me blossom out”. It prays to the Lord who is present all time, past, present and future and who is present at every place, to come and burn away the darkness of ignorance and give brightness and knowledge. In man’s life, there is his childhood, his youth and his old age.

These three stages of man are not distinct and different, but they are simply changes of one and the basic content. In the childhood there is youth, in the youth there is old age. This aspect of unity can be referred to the aspect of *Prajnana* and Viswamitra was demonstrating. With the help of this *Prajnana*, Viswamitra could even create a new universe. That is referred to as Trishanka. Ability to create something totally new is an aspect of *Prajnana*.... *Prajnana* enables you stand out only as a witness and experience everything around you. Veda has been telling that is you, thou art that, I am *Prajnana* and I am *Brahman*, in this way it makes you stand out as a witness and not become identical with your body. (*SSB 1977 p.138*)

**"Aum Bhurbhuvah Suvah
tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya dhimahi
dhiyo yo nah prachodayaat".**

So runs the sacred Gayatri Mantra¹⁹², an invocation to the Sun for the improvement of the faculty of Buddhi or intelligence. The

¹⁹² The spreading of *Vishnu tathwam* (nature of Vishnu) is known as *Trivikrama tathwam* (nature of Vishnu expanding to the three worlds). The aspect of *Trivikrama tathwam* is represented by the *Gayatri mantra*: '*Bhur Bhuvaha*.' The *Bhuloka Bhuharloka* and *Suvarloka* constitute the *Trivikrama tathwam*. It is wrong to conceive of these three *lokas* (worlds) as existing one on top of the other and thus capable of being reached by climbing a ladder, as it were. In fact the three *lokas* are intertwined with each other and one exists within the other.

Real meaning of the 'three worlds'

The real meaning of this kind of geometrical configuration of the three *lokas* is that the *pancha Indriya*, *pancha bhuthas* and *pancha koshas*

darkness of the ignorance is dispelled by the incandescence of the Buddhi, which shines its light like the glorious sun. "Among the faculties, I am the Buddhi", proclaims Krishna in the Vibhuti Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita. (*SSB 1979 p.152-153*)

Aswamedha Yaga

Rama announced his desire to celebrate Aswamedha yaga—It ensures the destruction of varieties of grief—He with his brothers approached the Preceptor. Vashishta rejoiced at the idea and said that Rama's wish would be fulfilled—He asked Bharatha to busy himself with the preparations for the Yaga- Vashishta advised Rama to send news to Janaka so that he could attend with his Queen and kinsmen- Send invitations to Brahmins and Maharshis - Ascetics and monks came to the City in groups. They were welcomed and accommodated with due regard to their spiritual eminence. Soon Viswamitra arrived. Rama honoured him, and offered reverential hospitality. (*R K R V Part II p.314-318*)

(five senses, elements and sheaths) aspects of man's *deha* (body), is *Bhuloka*; the aspect of *prana Shakti* or *manas tathwam* is *Bhuvarloka*; and the microscopic state of Anandam (bliss) represents *Suvarloka*. So it can be said that the three worlds, *Bhuloka*, *Bhuvarloka* and *Suvarloka*, are nothing but the *deha* thathwa, *manas* thathwa and *Ananda thathwa* (essential nature of body, mind and bliss) respectively and the totality of these three represents the *Trivikrama thathwa*. Again, these three aspects of *Trivikrama thathwa* can be understood in terms of the three states of an individual, viz., the one you think you are, the one others think you are and the one you really are. Hence only by proper *sadhana* can one transcend from *Bhuloka* through *Bhuvarloka* to *Suvarloka*. The attainment of *Suvarloka* is known as *moksha* (liberation), and it represents the stage of complete mergence with the Lord. Since it is a state where the aspect of *moha* (attachment) is made to disintegrate, it is known as *moksha* (*moha+kshyaam, mokshyam*). (*SSS Vol.14 p.189-190*)

CHARACTERISATION OF VISWAMITRA:

Viswamitra was the son of Emperor Gadhi. He enjoyed royal comforts right from his birth. He learnt the mantras associated with using several weapons and arrows, from Krisaswa. Since his father died at an early age, the Ministers, Feudal kings and the Royal Priests nurtured him carefully and crowned him the king. Though he was young at the time of ascending the throne, he ruled his kingdom in a manner that satisfied one and all. (*Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.103*)

Janma Kshatriya to Karma Brahmin

Kaushika was a Kshatriya, that is to say, a person of Rajasic nature. However, as the result of his deeds in the previous lives, Satwic tendencies attitudes centred his consciousness and went about adhering to truth. He transformed himself and sublimated his consciousness into pure state. The mantra uttered, and which emanated from the level of consciousness is the Gayatri. He is known as Viswamitra, the mitra of the entire Viswa, for he became the well – wisher of the entire world! Brahmins have accepted and acclaimed that mantra as a Divine Gift; they have revered and recited it and derive immense benefit. Kaushika was therefore a Janma Kshatriya but he became Karma- Brahmin. And he was accepted as such by the Vedas, which emanated from the voice of God. Thus it is clear that the Vedas proclaim the Path to all mankind without prejudice, partiality or sense of distinction. They pay attention only to the thoughts and acts of the individual. (*Sathya Sai Vahini p 128/129*)

King Janaka knew the greatness of Viswamitra

King Janaka knew the greatness of Viswamitra and he realised that Viswamitra brought some princes for the sake of handling the Shiva Dhanush and he gave them a very good reception. Rama was giving the impression that He was an ordinary human being because He came walking from a long distance. (*SSB 1977 p.149*)

Senses and the mind

The senses can do nothing by themselves. They are not independent. If the mind is brought under control the sense too can be controlled. Some people

undergo mere asceticism of the senses, in order to control the mind! They are ignorant of the real discipline necessary.. The real discipline is the destruction of desire. However vigilant the warders may be clever dacoit can still steal in a hundred amazing ways. So too, however skilfully you may try to control senses, the mind will drag them to its side and execute its desires through them. Note how the sage Viswamitra, in spite of his austerities, fell before the wiles of the Apsaras sent by Indra to tempt him If the outer door is alone closed and the inner door is left un bolted, calamity is certain. But if both the exterior and the interior doors are also safely bolted, you can sleep peacefully; for no thief, however clever, will find it easy to enter and harm. Therefore the Sadhaka should, therefore establish mastery over the external senses then mind, immersed in continuous succession of Vishya, or Subject – object relationship, has to be controlled by means of Shanti and Vairagya.. Equanimity and renunciation. When that is done, one can experience real Ananda. That is why Krishna once told Arjuna, “Those who aspire to have mastery over the senses must have full faith in Me.” (*Dhyana Vahini p.68-69*)

He told them, “Do not identify yourself with physical body. You are the embodiments of the atma. You are *Chaitanyaswarupas*. You are endowed with divine power. Always bear in mind. (*SSS VOL.36 Part II p 58-59*)

Atma is identical with divinity

Viswamitra recognised that this atma, which is identical with divinity, is present in everyone. It takes the form of *prajna* in the created form in order to establish the identity between the jivatma and Paramatma. (*SSB 1977 p.136*)

Spiritual Strength Is The Real Strength

Sage Viswamitra wanted to wreak vengeance on *Brahma Jnani* (one who has realised *Brahman*, the Supreme Self) Viswamitra relying upon his physical strength and power. Vashishta, however, relied upon his “*Brahma Jnana*” (knowledge of the *Brahman*) alone to fight against Viswamitra, since that was the only power he possessed. When the fight started, all those arrows discharged by Viswamitra became powerless, like those directed against a mountain. All the weapons broke into pieces. Seeing this, Viswamitra realised the truth that regal power and physical power crumbled before the *Brahma Bala* (the power of *Brahman*). After realising this truth, Viswamitra did great

penance to become a *Brahma Jnani* like Vashishta, and ultimately he succeeded. (*Bhagavad Gita Part I p. 121/122*)

The three stage of Viswamitra:

While taking Rama and Lakshmana to Mithilapura, he also undertook the task of getting Rama to remove the curse on Ahalya. After reaching Mithilapura, he gets Ramachandra to break Siva Bow and marry Sita. After the marriage of Sita, Viswamitra disappeared that very night and was not seen thereafter. Thus we see that the story of Viswamitra begins with taking Rama and Lakshmana with him and performing the marriage of Sita as the foundation for the ultimate destruction of Ravana. When he came to Dasaratha, he was in the first stage. When he taught the mantras *Bala and Athibala* to Rama and Lakshmana, he took the form of *Taijasa*. When he undertook to perform the marriage between Sita the jeevatma with Rama the Paramatma, he took the form of *Prajna*.

When we look at these three stages of Viswamitra, we understand that one can live without being dependent, to some extent, on material creation around him. At the time he is in the first stage, which is described as *Viswa*¹⁹³. Later, when we can acquire faith in the Divinity, then, we transform into the next higher stage described as *Taijasa*¹⁹⁴. If we do not stop at this stage, and if we develop the next stage and identify ourselves with *atma*, that can be described as *Pragna*. Because Viswamitra reached that stage of *Pragna*, he could realise that Rama was an incarnation of Narayana Himself, and in that context he was in contact with Rama. In this stage of *Pragna*¹⁹⁵, there will be a commendable determination to fulfil a task. That determination is permanent and unwavering. In this stage Viswamitra developed some kind of enmity with Vashishta because Vashishta was being described as *Brahmarishi* while he himself was described as *Rajarishi*. He was determined to see that he was be addressed as a *Brahmarishi* by Vashishta himself. Withstanding all kinds of difficulty and never wavering from his determination, Viswamitra went into very severe penance; He could withstand all the tests to which he was

¹⁹³ relating to the physical body - (*Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.104*)

¹⁹⁴ relating to the subtle body - *Ibid*

¹⁹⁵ relating to the causal body- *Ibid*

subjected by God Himself. In the end he succeeded in being called a *Brahmarishi* by Vashishta himself. Because he took such a hard and difficult vow and succeeded, we call him Brahman. Thus, if we want achieve anything, we should go into the state of an unwavering mind and a determination without swerving from the objective. Viswamitra demonstrated such sacred truths. (*SSB 1977 p.136-137*)

Human life consists of three stages, viz., childhood, youth and old age. They are however, changes in time, one lapsing into the other, they are not separate. They are not separate from one another. Sage Viswamitra was one who has realised the underlying unity in the *Prajnana Thathwa* (constant integrated awareness) that is present in all the three stages. He also made use of this *Prajnana* to create a new world (*Thrishanku Swarga*). (*Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.106/107*)

Vashishta and Viswamitra:

Viswamitra was a powerful king, proud of his might and the vastness of his kingdom. He wished to defeat the Sage Vashishta but could not succeed. Thus he learnt the lesson that material, physical or mental powers are too weak to win over Divine Power. So, he entered upon spiritual *sadhana* (effort) to rid his mind of anger, greed and envy. As a result, he himself became a sage. (*SSS Vol.14 p.285*)

Viswamitra, who had as a result of severe *thapas* for years, earned the power even to create another Heaven amenable to his will. His ego made him intensely passionate and short tempered (*Rajasic*). So, he was known as *Raaja-Yogi and Rajarishi*. He was jealous of the sage Vashishta who was adored as a *Brahmarishi* and sought that title for himself. This made him even more *Rajasic*. The wilder his desire, the higher rose the ego flames. (*SSS Vol.15 p.166*)

Viswamitra was not an ordinary sage. Earlier he was a great emperor. He wanted to take away Shabala, the wish-fulfilling cow from the ashram of Vashishta by force. A fierce battle ensued between the army of Viswamitra and the army created by the cow. Viswamitra was defeated in the battle and

all his sons were dead. Realizing that material wealth and power was no match to spiritual splendour and wealth, he became an ascetic. (*SSB 2002 p.79*)

All the great people and great saints, who understood Rama's divine aspect, took care to hide it from general public. Viswamitra and Vashishta were not ordinary people. They were great saints. They were people with great courage and strength. In fact they acquired proficiency in all the different aspects of learning and wisdom. It is not as if Viswamitra was unable to protect his own Yajna. He told Dasaratha, 'It is not as if I do not have the strength to protect my yajna but I have come to you with a specific purpose of letting the world know that great Rama, your son, and of spreading His reputation and your reputation.' Viswamitra is not taking Rama just for the protection of his *yagna*. We should see him only as an instrument for a higher purpose. He has no doubt prepared the ground for the destruction of the various demons, but he has also prepared the ground for the marriage of Rama and Sita. Having done all that, at a crucial time, Viswamitra goes out of the scene. Not only this, the situation then was such that we cannot easily determine whether Rama is truly divine or is an ordinary human being with great qualities. (*SSB 1977 p.4-5*)

Viswamitra was upset that, in spite of years of asceticism, his great rival, Vashishta, addressed him only as *Rajarishi*, and not by the coveted appellation, *Brahmarishi*; so, he crouched stealthily behind the seat of Vashishta one moonlight night, when he was teaching a group of disciples, determined to kill him with the sharp sword he had taken with him. He sat unseen amidst the bushes for a moment to listen to what Vashishta was telling them. What was his surprise when he heard Vashishta describing the charming moonlight and comparing it to the heart of Viswamitra, cool, bright, curative, heavenly, universal, all-pleasing! The sword fell from his grasp. He ran forward and prostrating at the feet of his rival, he held the feet. Vashishta recognised Viswamitra and accosting him, "O *Brahmarishi*, rise up", he lifted him on to his own seat. (*SSS Vol.5 p.96-97*)

A guide must free himself from hate and malice

Vashishta explained that he could not be styled *Brahmarishi*, so long as the ego persisted in him. When the swelling of the head disappeared and he fell at the feet of his rival, he became entitled for the honour he no longer coveted, and so deserved. He who aspires to be a guide of the people must first free himself of selfish propensities, of hate and malice. His words must be sweet to the ear and food to the spirit. They must be valued by all men as the panacea they need. If one is not capable of this high poetry, one must try to reach that height by purifying one's nature and clarifying one's outlook on this world and the next. (*SSS Vol.5 p. 97*)

His antipathy to sage Vashishta went to the extent of even contemplating the destruction of the sage. Viswamitra was hovering near the *ashram* when he overheard a conversation between Vashishta and his spouse, Arundathi. Arundathi expressed her admiration for the beautiful unblemished light the full moon was shedding that night. Immediately Vashishta observed: "Tonight's full moon is shining untainted like the pure penance of Viswamitra." On hearing these words, Viswamitra realised how mistaken he was regarding Vashishta and rushed into the ashram, fell at the feet of Vashishta and prayed to him to forgive him.

Vashishta lifted Viswamitra and hailed him as *Brahmarishi* (a sage who has realised the Supreme Self). Vashishta, who had previously described Viswamitra as a *Rajarishi* (a royal sage), spontaneously hailed him as a *Brahmarishi*. Viswamitra could not contain himself and asked Vashishta on what grounds he was calling Viswamitra a *Brahmarishi*. Vashishta said: "Viswamitra! Hitherto you were filled with self-conceit. You are born with ego, grew with ego, and never bowed your head to any one. Today you put an end to your ego and fell at my feet. This is the significance of egolessness. A *Brahmarishi* is one who is free from egoism, acquisitiveness, pride and arrogance (*SSS Vol.29 p.195-196*)

Viswamitra was no ordinary Sage. As his name implies, he was a friend to the whole world. How did he achieve this status? By giving humanity the priceless gift of the *Gayatri Mantra*. This great Viswamitra widely reputed for his intense penance, who possessed extraordinary spiritual powers, and who

was the *guru* of so many, was now taking the young Royal Princes Rama and Lakshmana to the forest. The party penetrated deep into the jungle and approached the river Sarayu. It was evening time, and the sage told the Princes, “Offer your evening prayers now.” After Rama and Lakshmana did so, Viswamitra pointed across the river and said, “We are going over there. That is where I shall be performing the *taga*. It is becoming dark, and You will see terrible demons there. To ensure that You do not get frightened, I shall teach You two *mantras*: *Bala* and *Athibala*. Come and sit near me and receive the instruction.” The sage taught the two *mantras*. You see how illusion blankets clear thinking! Here is the great sage who, in the Court of Dasaratha, emphatically declared and hailed Rama as God Incarnate. But now in the forest, that feeling has gone. He is imagining Rama to be a tender young prince, likely to be frightened by demons. This shows that no matter how evolved, when one has bodily relations, doubts can and do arise about Incarnations. Such doubts are the result of delusion. *Bhrama* (delusion) can eclipse Brahman (God)! Delusion is born of tendencies accumulated over many births. Divine feelings and the ability to recognise God in human form, on the other hand, is the result of sacred actions performed. What an ocean of difference separates *bhrama* and Brahman! Even a great sage like Viswamitra could come under the grip of *bhrama*! (*SSB 2000 p. 215-216*)

Rama and Lakshmana chanted these mantras and consequently had no hunger, thirst or sleep during their stay in the *Siddhashram*. When the *yajna* was in progress, there came a thunderous noise. Rama asked Viswamitra, “Swami, what is this noise? It sounds as though mountains are falling apart.” Viswamitra said, “It has nothing to do with mountains. It is the voice of demoness Thataki. She makes everyone tremble with her ferocity. Be prepared to face her. She is coming.” Rama had a doubt whether it was proper for a *Kshatriya* to kill a woman. Viswamitra said, “Rama, when it comes to protecting a *yajna*, you do not need to observe any difference between a man and a woman. Your main duty is to drive away all demons who come to disrupt it.” As this was the command of the Guru, Rama implicitly obeyed him and killed the ogress. But she was not the one to be killed easily.

A fierce battle ensued. Maricha and Subahu also came with their army of demons to disrupt the *yajna* but Rama killed Subahu with one arrow and with

another threw away Maricha at a long distance. Thereafter, peace prevailed in *Siddhashram*. There were rejoicings all around. Even gods of heaven showered flowers from the sky. The *yajna* was completed successfully. (SSS Vol.35 p.116-117)

Knew the divine aspect of Rama:

Sage Viswamitra was Brahmarishi who experienced the divinity of Sri Rama himself and also made known the truth to the world. He wrote a Smrithi (a sacred Text containing moral codes) containing nine chapters. The text is called “Viswamitra Smrithi”. (*Beacons of Divine wisdom Part 1 p.103*)

On the night when that *lagna*, that confluence, took place between the *jivatma* and *Paramatma*, Viswamitra disappeared from the scene. Till that merger took place, Viswamitra was keeping the divine aspect of Rama a secret. Not only Viswamitra, but also all the *rishis* kept it a secret because they wanted the destruction of Ravana to come about with certainty. If, even before the marriage of Sita and before the destruction of Ravana, they told everyone that Rama was an incarnation of God, marriage of Sita would not have taken place; Sita would not have been stolen and the death of Ravana would not have come about. This is the reason why from the very birth of Rama, He was conducting Himself and appearing to people as if He was an ordinary person. At no place, at no moment and in no circumstances did Rama proclaim that He was God in human form. The secret of Divinity is always like this and is hidden until the task, which God undertakes, is completed successfully. When the time comes, when the appropriate situation arises, then the divine strength will also become apparent to the world. Rama and Lakshmana were accompanying Viswamitra and they came to Mithilapura. King Janaka knew the greatness of Viswamitra, and he realised that Viswamitra brought some princes for the sake of handling the *Shiva Dhanush*, and he gave them a very good reception. Rama was giving the impression that He was an ordinary human being because He came walking from a long distance.

In Mithilapura, He was sitting alone in a room and was trying to press His feet and relieve the pain due to walking. The doors of the room were nearly closed, but there was a small opening. Narada, who knew all the time what was happening, came there and looked through the opening in the door and

found that Rama was pressing His own feet. He loudly exclaimed, “Oh *Paramatma*, what has happened? Why are You pressing Your own feet!” Viswamitra appeared on the scene immediately and told Narada that this secret of the incarnation of Rama must be kept carefully. He requested Narada not to bring about a catastrophe by announcing it openly. Viswamitra said that if this is done, then the marriage of Sita will not take place and the destruction of Ravana will not come about. All the *rishis*, who were really liberated people, had no selfish motives. This kind of conduct on their part was intended to give happiness and prosperity to the people. (*SSS 1977 p.149-150*)

Man alone can rise through effort to higher stages of spiritual evolution. No other animal can do so. Animal trainers of the Circus can train a tiger to perform various tricks, but they cannot change its nature. They cannot make it live on grass and completely deprive it of meat. But man is different. His nature can be changed by means of his own disciplined effort. He can control, by his will, the evil thoughts and ideas that arise in his mind. This is why birth as a human being is considered a rare gift.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

12. ASSOCIATES OF RAMA DURING HIS EXILE

Take up the Name of God, any of the innumerable ones, any that appeals to you most and the form appropriate to that Name and start repeating it. From now on, that is the Royal road to ensure joy and peace that will train you in the feeling of brotherhood and remove enmity towards fellowmen.

- **BABA**

12.1 GUHA

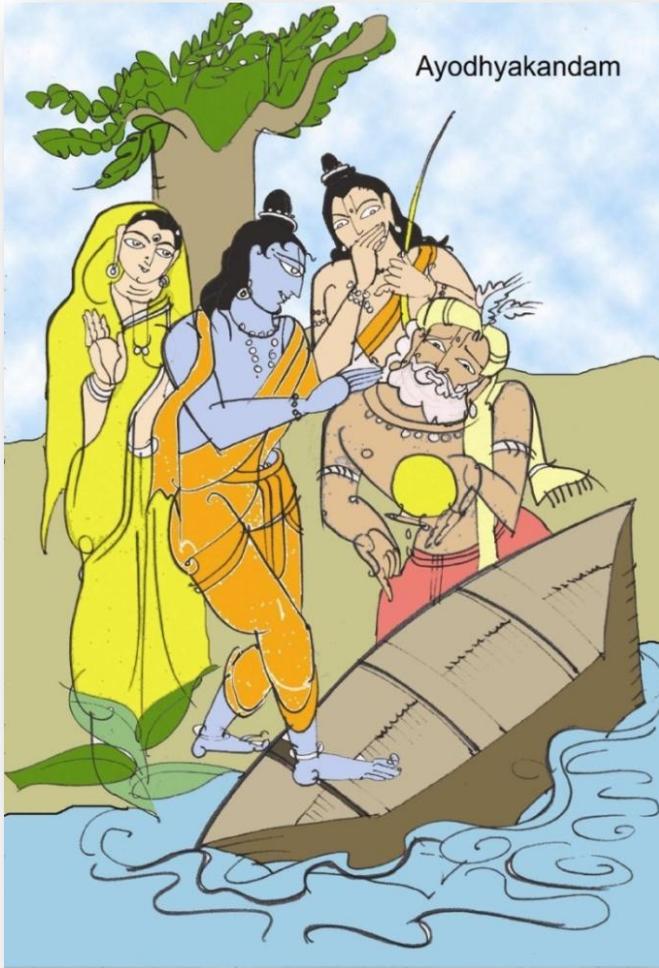


Figure 19: Chieftain of Nishadas

Source of the Painting:

Painting by Sri K V Bhima Rao exclusively for this book

GUHA

Guha, the Lord of the Nishadas, for whom Lord Rama had waited for a long time with Sita and Lakshmana, on the banks of the river Ganga. A hunter by profession, he lorded over the jungle at Sarayu. Valmiki, in his Ramayana, says that Lakshmana was amazed and puzzled by the compassion that Rama showed to Guha and the reciprocating love that Guha had for Sri Rama. Guha had unbounded love for the Royal family of the Ikshavahus, of which Sri Rama was a representative, a superior human being, with all the Kalyana Gunas of the Lord Almighty.

Guha was no ordinary mortal. He was the Chieftain of the tribe of the Nishadas. A man of great prestige and power.

"Valmiki in his Ramayana introduces him as a friend of Rama. "The king of that territory, Guha by name, was a friend of Sri Rama, dear to him as his own life. He was a Nishada by birth, possessed of bodily as well as military strength [owning as he did a large army consisting of all the four limbs, viz., elephants, chariots, horsemen and foot soldiers] and well-known as a ruler of Nishadas." (Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya Kanda, Canto L, Sloka 33). "

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

GUHA: King of the country of Nishadas on banks of the river Ganga. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

Guha was an ordinary boatman. Rama hailed him as the fourth brother and showered his love on Guha. (*SSS Vol.27 p.110*)

Guha, the forest chief, was another to be redeemed by Rama¹⁹⁶. 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. (*SSS Vol.25 p.184-185*)

ENTERING INTO EXILE

Guha meets Rama:

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana reached the outskirts of the town of Stringivera, with Minister Sumantra. Rama noticed the river Ganga, and immediately directed Sumantra to stop the Chariot. He alighted and prostrated on the bare ground before the Stream of Holiness. Sita and Lakshmana as well as Sumantra got down and did likewise. Rama told the others that Ganga was the source of all the wealth and prosperity, all the peace and plenty that shone around. Ganga gave all beings Supreme Bliss and the

¹⁹⁶ Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Pathithapaavana - Teachings And Advice - God is happy when He rescues those in agony:*

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

Highest spiritual boons. They then decided to bathe in the Holy Waters. (*RKRV Part I p.342*)

A few boatmen could be seen collected there. Their eyes fell on the Royal Chariot, as well as on the princely forms of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana. They inferred that they must have arrived at that place on a picnic. So, they hastened to their chieftain, Guha, and informed him that some Royal Visitors were near. Guha sent a messenger to enquire and ascertain who they were and what their purpose was in the forest, by the shore of the Ganga.

He brought back the information that they were none other than the sons of Emperor Dasaratha, and that the Princess was Sita herself, and that they were accompanied by the Royal Minister, Sumantra. Guha felt that the supremely delightful moments should not be enjoyed alone! He informed his kinsmen and comrades and friends that the great Prince, Rama, had come to the Ganga with his brother and wife. He collected fruits and flowers in plenty, and the entire party proceeded in reverential humility towards the Ganga. Guha placed the fruit and flower offerings at the feet of the Royal Visitors and fell at the feet of Rama. His kinsmen and friends also prostrated before Rama.

Watching the joy that thrilled them, Rama called Guha near and enquired of him how they fared and whether they were all happy and peaceful. He asked the chieftain Guha how far his administration was helping the community to prosper. Guha answered, “Lord, Ramachandra! Beholding your Feet, we have all derived limitless Ananda. We achieved this great good luck only through the merit accumulated by us, by good deeds in the

past. Or else, can we who spend our days in this inaccessible forest, ever hope to be blessed by your visit and the Darsan of your Lotus Feet? From now on, this region is certain to enjoy plenty and peace, for your Feet have trodden this soil. There can be no doubt of this; the transformation is bound to happen.”

Guha offers his all to Rama

Lakshmana, Sita and Sumantra noted the sincere expression of his joy and the tears of ananda. They were astonished at his devotion, humility and wisdom. Meanwhile, Guha held fast the Feet of Rama and said, “Lord! All this is yours. All the riches, territory, and authority that I have as Chieftain, as well as all my subjects are yours. They are awaiting your commands. They are at your disposal, usable for your purposes, your services. I am your servant. Accept me as such, accept all that I am offering and enter the City where we dwell.”

When Rama heard this prayer, he smiled and replied, “Guha! you are a staunch devotee. You are deeply virtuous. Your heart is very pure. But listen, I have to roam the forest as an exile, wearing the habiliments of a hermit, in obedience to the command of my father. I should not step into a town or city. I must take only the food prescribed for monks engaged in austerities. I have to live in accordance with regulations laid down for ascetics doing thapas. For these reasons, I am unable to fulfil the wish that you have expressed now.”

Hearing these words, Guha was stricken with sorrow. The large gathering of people, who had come there from the city, Stringivera, whispered among themselves about the divine charm

of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. One of them wondered how the parents of those lovely brothers and that angelic lady could possibly exile them into the forest. “How could their tongue ever pronounce such a sentence?” At this, another retorted, “Keep quiet, you fool! Those parents have really done good. Had they not spoken that sentence, we could not have feasted our eyes on their Divine Forms. This day, our eyes were enjoying a rare festival.” This filled many with satisfaction and joy. The Nishada tribesmen who comprised the gathering spoke among themselves words of worshipful admiration of the royal visitors. They extolled the beauty, the tenderness, the soft sweet natures of Sita, of Rama and Lakshmana.

Guha was immersed in sorrow that he had lost the fortune of welcoming Rama into the capital City of the Nishadas, whose chieftain he was. He felt that even if the City, was “seen” by Rama, even if his eyes glanced at it once, it would be blessed with peace and prosperity forever. So, he suggested that Rama should walk up towards a gigantic but gorgeous Simsupa tree that grew nearby and Rama agreed. Guha knew that Rama’s eye had fallen on the City from that spot. He was pleased at the thought. Rama too was happy when he saw the City from a distance. He allowed the Nishadas to touch his feet and directed that they should return to their homes, since nightfall was imminent. (*RKRV Part I p.343-345*)

Lakshmana’s service to Rama – keeps vigil – Guha also joins in the vigil - He was in grief thinking of the strange turn of Fate:

Then Rama went through the holy rites that had to be observed at dusk. Meanwhile, Guha gathered quantities of soft grass and tender leaves, and prepared soft beds. He sent his subjects to collect tubers and fruit, tasty and fresh, from the trees and creepers of the forest, and to bring them packed in leaves, for being offered to the distinguished visitors. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana as well as Sumantra partook of the frugal meal, and retired for rest and sleep.

Lakshmana sat in the “hero” posture so that he could gaze intently at the four directions, and recognise at once any wild animal approaching the spot, or any demon or demonic person bent upon disturbing the sleep of Rama. He was all attention and vigilance.

Seeing this, Guha too instructed his faithful lieutenants to guard the area and ensure that nothing happened to disturb the sleep of Rama. He put on his shoulder the pouch of arrows, and holding the bow in readiness, sat near Lakshmana, eager to share his vigil.

Guha, his eyes filled with tears, held his palms folded before him, and asked him, “Lakshmana! The Palace of Emperor Dasaratha is, I guess, grander and more magnificent than the Divine Mansion of the Ruler of the Gods, Indra. In that Palace, everything is charming and beautiful. Everywhere there is fragrance and sweetness; soft featherbeds and lamps embossed

with precious gems, add to the grandeur and comfort of the palace. There, the beds have sheets light and white like froth on fresh milk, and pillows to match. Sita and Rama who were used to sleeping on such luxurious beds are now lying on a grassy heap with no coverlet or pillow, sleeping through sheer physical exertion! It is insufferable agony for me to contemplate this scene. There his father and mother, his aids and maids were looking after his needs and comforts in various ways. Sita and Rama who lived royally until yesterday are now lying on the ground! Alas, my heart is torn to pieces by grief.

“Sita is the beloved daughter of the world-renowned Emperor Janaka; yet now, she is lying on a spread of dry grass. What a strange turn of fate is this! Are Sita and Rama fit for life in the forest? Oh, it is now being proved true that the consequences of one’s acts are binding, in spite of everything else.

“Kaikeyi is the daughter of the King of Kekaya State. No one can believe that she is capable of this atrociously sinful act. These two are at a period of their lives when they have to be happy together. What a reprehensible act is it to inflict on them this hard sentence! Such a fate should not overtake even one’s worst enemy.

“The Kekaya Princess has proved herself to be the axe that would cut asunder the very roots of the Tree of the Solar Dynasty. Her selfish greed has sunk the world in sorrow. Ah! My horrid eyes are destined to look on this pathetic sight! What despicable sin did I indulge in to deserve this punishment?

Whose happy life caused my eyes in the past to become red with envy, that I had to see my beloved Rama in this plight?”

Guha wailed thus. Unable to stop the onrush of the surging waves of grief, he kept his mouth shut, and sat with head bowed in irrepressible agony. At this, Lakshmana too was plunged in gloom¹⁹⁷. (*RKRV Part I p.346-348*)

Agony sears the heart of Guha:

When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana reached the banks of the Ganga, Sumantra, the aged Minister of the Court who had taken them so far in the Royal Chariot, could not follow them; he had in duty bound to return to the Capital. So, he turned back with tearful eyes. (*SSS Vol.13 p.57*)

When Guha saw the plight of Sumantra¹⁹⁸, he was so overpowered with agony that he leaned on a tree, sobbing, with his head pressed against its trunk. After sending the aged Minister back, Rama proceeded to the Ganga, with his wife and brother.

“When even dumb animals found it impossible to live away from Rama, what can be said of the anguish suffered by the parents who had borne him and brought him up lovingly and with such great hope, and by the subjects of the realm who adored him with loyalty and love. Alas! Who can measure the grief that was

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter, *Lakshmana - Conversation with Guha:*

¹⁹⁸ See Chapter, *Sumantra - Sumantra leaves with a heavy heart:*
See also - **Sumantra’s encounter with Guha:**

harrowing the heart of Queen Kausalya?” Guha thought within himself. The sorrow seared his soul.

RAMA DESIRES TO CROSS THE RIVER:

His eyes soon fell on Rama, Sita and Lakshmana walking towards the Ganga. So, he hurried towards them, and realising that they desired to cross the river, he shouted to the boatman who was on the opposite bank, to bring the boat to the ferry. When the voice of his master fell on the ear, the boatman hastened to row it across and, within moments, it was ready where Rama was awaiting its arrival. (*RKRV Part I p.356*)

The boatman 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:

Guha called the boatman aside and told him to clean the boat and make it fit for the Prince of Ayodhya, the Son of Emperor Dasaratha, his Consort and brother, to go across the Ganga, on their way to the forest where they intended to spend some years. The boatman had heard from his Nishada brothers the sad tale of the exile of the Heir-apparent to the throne. So, he lost no time in coming over. But he had one disturbing doubt that had to be resolved. He had come to know that Rama had placed his foot on a rock and that it was suddenly transformed into a woman; was this same Rama, or was he a different person? That was the question he asked Guha. Guha said, “My dear boatman, what a

strong memory you have! I am glad you remembered that incident which happened long ago, and you have reminded me too of it!” He turned to Rama and said, with great exultation, “Rama! Listen! This man, my tribesman, this boatman has treasured in his mind your majesty and glory; he is now bringing back to my memory how you released Ahalya, the wife of Sage Gautama, from the stone into which she had been cursed. My subjects were very much agitated over the terrible curse that was inflicted on that lady. And they were delighted when they knew of your Divine Power that liberated her. Oh, how fortunate are my people that they are aware of your Divinity!” Guha was describing the faith and devotion of his boatman in great joy.

Meanwhile, Rama moved towards the boat. The boatman stood before Rama with folded palms and said, “Ramachandra! All the years of my life have become worthwhile with the good fortune that has come to me today. The Rama of whom I had heard long ago, I am able to look upon today. That I could row you, your consort and your brother across the Ganga is the reward I have earned by accumulating merit through many previous lives. Let me pray for one blessing; allow me to sprinkle on my head the water sanctified by washing your feet, before I row you across.” Guha had not realised that his servant, the boatman was so deep in devotion to Rama. He was surprised at the request he had so humbly laid before Rama. He was supremely delighted that the man had prayed so. He said, “Listen to me, brother! Let Rama take his seat in the boat; then, you can wash his feet with the waters of the Ganga taken in a vessel, it is not good manners to wash them while he is standing on the bank.” Guha reprimanded him for his obstinacy and simplicity.

But the boatman would not yield. He pleaded, “Lord! You possess vast wealth. I am helplessly poor. I am scraping together the wherewithal to maintain my family through the fees I get for ferrying people across. I find my daily income insufficient even for running my little family. How can I be happy, if even this income is lost? Therefore, please do not misunderstand me. Permit me to wash your feet, even before you step into the boat.”

Rama grasped the undertone of the boatman’s strange request. He smiled and turned towards Sita, saying, “Did you notice this boatman’s fear?” Guha could not understand what it all meant, and why Rama had smiled. He was perplexed at the fellow’s behaviour. He said, “Hello, boatman! I do not understand what you are talking about. How is the cost of maintaining your family related to this present duty of yours—taking Rama across the Ganga so that he might enter the forest and live there? Are you demanding more fees from Rama for this hereditary task? If so, you are only revealing your greed! In case your earnings are not enough for the support of your family, I am ready to supplement it, as the chief of this realm. Don’t yearn to get it from Ramachandra. Attend to your business and get the boat ready.” Guha grew angry at the persistence of the fellow.

At this, the boatman submitted that he had heard people say that the feet of Rama had some peculiar power. They say when the feet contacted a stone, it turned into a woman. My boat is made by putting together many pieces of timber. If each piece becomes a woman, my Lord would leave them all to my care, for, they were born from the parts of my boat! How can I bear the additional burden? But if the feet are washed before he places

them in the boat, I can be free from fear. Besides, when I sprinkle the wash on my head, my sins too would vanish. Therefore, please permit me to have my wish fulfilled.” Guha was lost in thought. But Rama called the boatman near him, and he said, with smile lighting up his face, “My dear man, come, wash my feet” and he placed his feet in the palms of the boatman! His joy knew no bounds. He kept the feet within his palms and washed them both very carefully and lovingly, not missing the space between the toes, using the sacred Ganga water. Then, he sprinkled the wash on his own head, and over all parts of the boat, to guard them against malefic powers. He was immensely delighted at the success of his plan.

He held the hand of Rama, as he placed his foot in the boat and got in. Rama helped Sita to board the boat, holding her hand firm in his grip. He made Lakshmana sit beside him on one of the cross planks. They spoke to each other of the devotion and childlike innocence of the boatman, and enjoyed the movement of the boat over the waters. They conversed with Guha on various topics and the time passed so quickly that they found themselves on the other bank without being aware of the journey. Rama pretended to be ashamed of himself when he found he had not even a cowrie shell to offer the boatman, in lieu of the fees due to him. Sita knew the feeling of her Lord’s heart, by instinct. She removed a ring from a finger of hers and placed it in the hands of Rama. Rama hailed the boatman and said, “Here, Boatman! This is your fee. Take it.” The boatman fell at the feet of Rama, exclaiming, “Oh Rama! This day I achieved the gift of gifts. All my sins have been smashed into dust. I am liberated from the awful doom of birth and death. The pang I endured for

many lives on earth have borne fruit. My God has blessed me. My forefathers and my progeny have been freed from sin by this blessing. Lord! Enough for me if I receive and deserve your blessings. And when you return, Oh Lord! come this way, and confer on me the chance to do this service. That is the reward I value most in life.” He fell prostrate on the ground before Rama, with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Rama and Lakshmana consoled the boatman and tried to assuage his ecstasy. They attempted to persuade him to accept the gift. But the boatman protested, saying, “If I accept fees for taking you across this tiny stream, tell me how much are you receiving as wages for taking generations of my line, and billions of my fellowmen across the vast and terrifying ocean of *Samsara* which involves all beings in the fast moving current of change. I am immersed in Bliss since I got this chance. Please do not bind me further by forcing me to accept wages for this lucky chance that fell my way.” These words touched the heart of Rama. He felt that it would not be good to put pressure on him. Rama blessed him most liberally and allowed him to depart.

Rama asks Guha to go back but Guha expresses his desire to serve Rama for some more time:

Rama and Lakshmana placed their bows and arrows on clothes spread on the bank, and they stepped into the river for bath. When they finished, Sita too stepped into the sacred river and after bath, she offered prayers to Ganga, and vowed that she would return after spending fourteen happy years with her Lord and sprinkle on her head the sacred water in thankfulness for the conclusion of the exile.

Then Rama called Guha near and said, “Dear friend! I have already used, for my own purpose, too much of your time. Now, you must go back to your town.” When this command fell on his ear, the face of Guha fell. Tears flowed down the cheeks in streams. With palms folded, he prayed, “Rama. Please listen to my words. I shall be with you for some time in the forest. I know all the paths of the jungle. I can give you useful information. I am desirous of serving you this way. Please do not say no.” Rama was happy when he noticed Guha’s love and devotion, and he took him with him. Walking some distance, they rested awhile when evening fell, under the shade of a wide-spreading tree.

Guha and Lakshmana hurried to sweep the area clean and make it fit for Rama and Sita to rest. The fruits on that tree were looking very eager to fall and be of service to the Divine visitors. They turned red with excitement and joy. Guha and Lakshmana collected the fruits and placed them on broad leaves before Sita and Rama. But Rama asked his brother, “Lakshmana, can we eat these fruits without first performing the evening rites?” So, they proceeded to Prayag, the confluence of the holy rivers, which was nearby and had the holy sight, before they took their bath. Rama described to them the glories of the spot, while returning from the river. He said that the efficacy of the waters at the confluence of the three holy rivers was so potent that it could cleanse man of all the sins that tarnish his mind. (*RKR V Part I p.356-362*)

Rama enters hermitage of Bharadwaja:

Rama entered the hermitage of Bharadwaja taking Sita with him and accompanied by Lakshmana and Guha. Sage Bharadwaja¹⁹⁹ was dilating delightfully on Rama Principle; Rama listened, as if it all related to another person called Rama. Seeing him filled with ecstasy, with tears flowing, Guha was overwhelmed with surprise. He said to himself, “Oh! What great good fortune is mine!” He was overcome by supreme joy. (*RKRV Part I p.363-364*)

Rama asks Guha to go to his post of duty:

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana finished their bath, without paying heed to them, and coming onto the bank, Rama called Guha near, and said, “Dear one! It is a long time since you joined us. It is not proper that you should spend so much time with us. You must carry out your duties to your subjects. Go home now, to your post of duty.” He then gave him permission to leave. Guha found himself helpless to answer him. “Can anyone give up the wish-fulfilling gem that he has come by? How unfortunate I am to be forced to do so!” he wailed. He could not disregard the command of Rama. So, he prostrated before Sita, Rama and Lakshmana, and showered on his head the dust of their feet. He left their presence, most unwillingly. A short time after Guha left them, the three resumed their journey. (*RKRV Part I p.366*)

¹⁹⁹ See Chapter, *Bharadwaja Maharshi*

THE BROTHERS MEET

Guha was perturbed to see Bharatha coming with a big army — wanted to discover whether Bharatha was a friend or foe:

Resuming their journey, with the dawn of the third day, they (*Bharatha, Shatrughna and their entourage*) reached Sringeripuram when darkness fell on the land. The king of the Nishadas saw the huge concourse and the army on the march. He was perturbed; for, he wondered why Bharatha was proceeding to the forest and why he was taking with him the army with all its components. What was the significance of it all? He tried to solve the mystery. He discussed within himself the pros and cons of this unusual procedure. He argued within himself: “When the tree is poisonous, its fruit too is bound to be poisonous.” He tried his best to foil the plans of Bharatha. He directed his men to keep every boat sunk in the depths of the Ganga and to deprive the prince of all means of crossing the river. He ordered that they should prevent the concourse from crossing over to the other bank, even at the cost of their lives.

And the King of the Nishadas stood ready with his bow and arrow, set to attack, willing to sacrifice his life in the cause of his beloved Rama, in spite of the fact that the forces which Bharatha was leading were far superior in strength to his own.

Guha alerted his community and all its members to be prepared for the imminent battle. Then, he got ready to meet Bharatha in order to discover whether he had come as foe, or as friend, or whether he was neutral, only a passing visitor who need not be worried about. Knowing that Bharatha was a Prince of Imperial

lineage, he secured as offering to be presented to him large quantities of flowers, fish, flesh and fruits.

He planned to discover the innate intent of Bharatha by noting his reactions to the various articles that were offered to him. Roots and tubers and fruits are Satwic food.

If he preferred them, he must be reckoned a friend. The flesh of slain animals is Rajasic food. Preference for that type of food would mark out the “middle of the road” neutral, who is neither ally nor adversary. Fish, if accepted eagerly, would indicate a foe, for they are Tamasic items of food.

Taking with him these offerings, Guha, the Chieftain of the Nishadas, proceeded to the presence of Bharatha²⁰⁰. Good omens greeted him at the very first step. His eyes fell on the Sage Vashishta. He ran forward and fell at his feet, announcing himself by name. The Preceptor recognised him as the companion of Rama. He blessed the Chieftain, and calling Bharatha to his side, he spoke to him of Guha as the “friend” of Rama.

As soon as those words fell on his ears, Bharatha embraced Guha warmly, and showered questions on him about his health and

²⁰⁰ When Bharatha left Ayodhya and went to the river Ganges, even Guha had some doubt about the intentions of Bharatha. Guha asked Bharatha if he was taking all the attendants with him to Rama with a view to cause some harm to Rama. Bharatha was not in a position to give any reply. (*SSB 1977 p.71*)

welfare. Bharatha prompted Guha to relate to him how he met Rama²⁰¹.

Guha grasped the situation clearly now and gave up all the suspicions he had entertained, when he saw Bharatha advancing with his army, with its four components of infantry, cavalry, elephantry and chariotry, towards the jungle where Rama was. He opened his heart to Bharatha and begged to be pardoned for the doubts he had framed in his mind about his intentions. *(RKRV Part I p.423-425/427)*

Bharatha asked the Chieftain of the Nishadas to direct his people to go home. They ate the fruits bought by Guha and spent the whole night talking about Rama and His glory. *(RKRV Part I p.429)*

Next morning... everyone got ready having finished their baths in the sacred Ganga to continue the journey. Guha, the Chieftain of the Nishada tribe, collected enough craft to row over the large mass of people, the chariots, the horses, and other sections of the armed forces that had accompanied Bharatha. The task of ferrying them across the Ganga was quickly and successfully accomplished. After ascertaining whether all had been transported across, Guha moved forward into the jungle, showing Bharatha the way. The Brahmins and the Preceptor Vashishta walked on as one group. The people of Ayodhya followed in one

²⁰¹ See Chapter, *Bharatha - Bharatha's interaction with Guha - Bharatha follows the trails left by Rama and wants to see all the places that Rama set his foot on:*

vast mass. Units of the army followed behind. (*RKRV Part I p.429*)

Guha takes leave of Rama with a heavy heart:

Rama saw the chieftain of the Nishadas standing before him, amidst his followers. He went forward to him and extending his arms, he embraced him, more warmly than when he clasped to his bosom his own brother. He consoled Guha, with affectionate appeals to calm himself and persuaded him to accept the separation wisely. Guha could not do anything to change the turn of events; so he fell at the feet of Rama, and rose with a heavy heart, and walked off, with his eyes fixed on Rama for as long as he could catch sight of that picture of charm. (*RKRV Part I p.477*)

RETURNING TO AYODHYA

Rama on his way back to Ayodhya meets Guha:

The chieftain of the Nishada tribe, Guha, who was yearning most ardently for the return of Rama, his brother and his consort, espied the Pushpaka in the sky. He fell flat on the ground in grateful obeisance, the very moment he saw the vehicle. Lo and behold, the Pushpaka landed just then at the very place. Guha ran forward and fell at the feet of Rama. Tears streamed from his eyes. He could not contain his delight. He rose and embraced Rama in the ecstasy of his heart. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana conferred their blessings on the tribal chieftain. They took their bath in the sacred river and ordered Guha to bring the ferryboat for them to cross the Ganga. The Pushpaka, which belonged to

Kubera, before Ravana appropriated it, was sent back to its original owner. (*RKRV Part II p.270*)

INNER PERCEPTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS:

Nothing ever happens without proper reason

It was the first night of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in the thick jungle into which they were exiled. Guha (the chieftain of the fisherman), who had rowed them across the Ganges was engaged in subdued conversation with Lakshmana, while Rama and Sita were sleeping, on the river bed! Guha was sunk in sorrow, that the inheritor of the empire should be cast on the sands under the sky; he cursed the Queen Kaikeyi (step mother of Rama) and her wicked accomplices for contriving this heart breaking tragedy. But Lakshmana prayed that he halt his tirade. I too emitted fiery fury at the perpetrators of this tragedy. For, I did not then know the inner purpose of this chapter of Rama's history. He has come in this human form to destroy the evil brood of demons, and so, He has himself contrived this exile, to be free from imperial responsibilities until that aim is accomplished. What do we know, dear Guha, of the mysteries of God or even of man, who is but God in human attire? Or of any living being or non-living matter, for they are all the inscrutable Divine, appearing to our limited senses in the way they do, what their real nature is, how can we ever know, with these inefficient instruments of knowledge? Nothing ever happens without proper reason, however accidental or mysterious, it might appear. The roots go deep and are out of sight. (*SSS Vol.7 p.405-406*)

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)

Rama, the redeemer of the fallen

Guha, the forest chief, was another to be redeemed by Rama²⁰². 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. (SSS Vol.25 p.185)

You should come with empty hands, without even the traditional offerings of patram, pushpam, phalam and thoyam (leaf, flower, fruit and water). Come with clean hands that proclaim that they have renounced attachment to riches, then, I fill them with grace. I must say that I accept certain things, before giving you that grace; I demand and take sathya, dharma, shanti and prema. I seek the gifts of truth, virtue, peace and love. I draw you to me and then reform and reshape you. I am a kind of smith who repairs broken, leaky, damaged hardware. I repair broken hearts and fragile minds, warped intellects, feeble resolutions and fading faith.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

²⁰² Under section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Pathithapaavana - Teachings And Advice - God is happy when He rescues those in agony:*

Heart must understand heart; heart must be drawn to heart, if friendship must last. Friendship must bind two hearts and affect both of them beneficially, whatever may happen to either – loss or gain, pain or pleasure, good fortune or bad. The bond must survive all the blows of fate and be unaffected by time, place and circumstance. Each must correct the other; for each must welcome criticism and comment from the other; for each knows that they come from sympathy and love. Each must be vigilant that the other does not slide from the ideal, that the other does not cultivate habits that are deleterious or hide thoughts and plans that are productive of evil. The honour of each is in the safekeeping of the other. Each trusts the other and places reliance on the other's watchful love. Only those deserve the name – friends – who help in uplifting life, cleansing ideals, elevating emotions and strengthening resolves.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

12.2 JAMBAVANTHA



Figure 20: Ruler of the Bears

Source of the Photo from Wikipedia:

Description **English:** Jambavan

Date 1820 (? Watermark is 1816)

Source http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=3082100&partid=1&searchText=Jambavan&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numpages=10&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx¤tPage=1

Author unknown painter

This is a faithful photographic reproduction of an original two-dimensional work of art. The work of art itself is in the public domain

JAMBAVANTHA

Jambavantha, the King of the Bears, is a sloth bear in Indian epic tradition (though he is also described as a gorilla in other scriptures), immortal to all but his father Vishnu. In the Valmiki Ramayana however, he is described as being a Vanara or monkey. Several times he is mentioned as Kapishreshtha (Foremost among the monkeys) and other epithets generally given to the Vanaras. He is known as Riksharaj (King of the Rikshas). Rikshas are described as something like Vanaras but in later versions of Ramayana Rikshas are described as bears. He was created by Brahma, to assist Rama in his struggle against Ravana. Jambavan was present at the churning of the ocean, and is supposed to have circled Vamana seven times when he was acquiring the three worlds from Mahabali. He was the King of the Himalayas who had incarnated as a bear in order to serve Rama. He had received a boon from Lord Rama that he would have a long life, be handsome and would have the strength of ten million lions.

In the Mahabharata, Jambavantha had killed a lion, who had acquired a gem called Syamantaka from Prasena after killing him. According to a Hindu legend, this gem was later renamed as the Koh-i-Noor diamond of the present day. Krishna was suspected of killing Prasena for the jewel, so he tracked Prasena's steps until he learned that he had been killed by a lion that had been killed by a bear. Krishna tracked Jambavantha to his cave and a fight ensued. After twenty-eight days, realizing who Krishna was, Jambavantha submitted. He gave Krishna the gem and also presented him his daughter Jambavati, who became one of Krishna's wives.

In the epic Ramayana, Jambavantha helped Rama find his wife Sita and fight her abductor, Ravana. Later, it is he who makes Hanuman realize his immense capabilities and encourages him to fly across the ocean to search for Sita in Lanka.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

JAMBAVANTHA

The Ruler of the Bears (Jambavan) (*RKRV Part II p.203*)

Jambavantha²⁰³: Old monkey leader of extraordinary might; the ruler of the bears. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

²⁰³ Also known as Jambavan (Jaambavaan). Also Jaambavantha. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*) Known also as Jamvanta, Jambavat, or Jambuvan.

Rama's 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. (*SSS Vol.25 p.183*)

Despair in the search for Sita:

One day, during their journey, the monkeys sank in gloom and sighed, "Alas, of the period allotted to us by our Master, Sugriva, only two days remain. And we have not traced Sita!" Angada and the rest lamented their fate and were lost in despair. Tears rolled down their cheeks. They had come to the shore of the sea and were sad that not one of them could cross it to continue the search. So, they sat in groups on the sands and were pining in disappointment. Jambavantha, the old leader, counselled Angada in many ways. "Why do you grieve? We have put forward our best efforts. We have searched all places without the least dereliction of duty. We have not wasted a single moment in idling. We have not worried even about food and drink. We have been engaged ceaselessly in the search for Sita. Our Master and ruler, Sugriva, might not be a witness to our activities; but believe me, Rama is witnessing them!

Therefore, Rama will not be a party to the infliction of any punishment on us. We have no reason to fear the anger of Sugriva. Since this is His Task, let us carry it out with His Name on our tongue and His Form in our minds." (*RKRK Part II p.114*)

Decision as to who would leap over the ocean:

Jambavantha addressed them thus. "Friends, old age has overwhelmed me. My skill and strength have declined. Somehow

prodded by the joy of executing the commands of Rama and encouraged by His Blessings, I have been able to stay on till now and move about with you. I was in full possession of my strength and intelligence, and in the best adult stage of life, when the Lord incarnated as Vamana and demonstrated His *Trivikrama* Form.”

Hearing this, the Vanaras gathered around the Crown Prince of their kingdom, Angada²⁰⁴. “Oh Prince,” they pleaded, “Search for some feasible means. Decide who amongst us has to attempt to leap over the ocean.” Then, Angada called together a full session of all the Vanaras and announced that he would like to know the capacity of each for this enterprise.

Jambavantha suggested that someone else might be charged with the errand and Angada looked around, and looking at Hanuman, he said, “Oh Son of the Wind-God, you are the dedicated servant of Rama. Your devotion is indeed deep. You were blessed first among all of us with the Darsan of Rama (*RKR V Part II p. 120*)

Jambavantha praises Hanuman²⁰⁵:

First, Rama inquired about their health and welfare. Meanwhile, Jambavantha, the senior-most among them rose and said, “Those who have earned your compassion are indeed blessed. That endows them with all virtues. Such a one’s renown will encompass the three worlds.” He praised Hanuman in various ways. Hanuman rose and prostrated before Rama. He described

²⁰⁴ See Chapter, *Angada* - **Angada asks Hanuman to cross the ocean over to the land of Rakshasas:**

²⁰⁵ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - **Hanuman narrates what transpired in Lanka:**

in detail the island of Lanka. He told Him of the plight of Sita with tears of joy and commiseration flowing from his eyes, and placed in Rama's hands the crest-jewel that he had brought with extreme care and caution. Rama clasped Hanuman to his bosom. He said, "Oh Son of the Wind-god! Tell me more of Sita, her plight and her feelings." (*RKRV Part II p.157*)

The March:

When Rama heard these words steeped in sincerity and humility, he was very pleased. He turned to Lakshmana and said, "Brother, prepare for the campaign, without delay." Watching the earth-shaking forces that were gathered and the preparations that Jambavan and Sugriva made, quite soon, the Gods themselves were astounded, and gratified. The monkey warriors touched the feet of Rama and raised a triumphal roar. Rama blessed them all by his glance of compassion and benediction. Each warrior became a mountain peak that had grown wings! They marched forward with exultation at every step. Auspicious omens greeted them as soon as they stepped forward. Sita too at Asoka Garden sensed auspiciousness that very moment.

Ravana was beset by ominous forebodings indicated by inauspicious happenings. Jambavan and others plucked huge trees and waved them as arms. They raised such war cries on their way that the earth shook under their feet and the skies rumbled all around. Off and on, they cheered, "Victory to Lord Ramachandra." In Lanka every Rakshasa was struck with anxiety about what was in store for him in days to come. They were afraid of the disaster that was imminent. They were

convinced they could not escape the calamity. They could communicate their fears to each other only in whispers since they were mortally afraid of Ravana. (*RKRV Part II p.159-160*)

Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Angada, and Jambavan were making arrangements for the massive action to be launched against Lanka. Rama divided His army into two sections, headed by Angada on one side and Jambavan on the other. (*SSB 1996 p.61*)

Jambavantha opposes Vibhishana’s refuge:

When Vibhishana ²⁰⁶ sought Rama’s refuge, Sugriva, Jambavantha opposed, saying, “Swami, you should never believe these *rakshasas* (demons). There must be some ulterior motive behind this act of Vibhishana. So ask him to return to Lanka.” Rama replied, “Once someone says, ‘I am yours,’ whoever he may be, I will take care of him. So I will not reject Vibhishana.” This is a testimony to God’s Love. (*SSS Vol.31 p.364*)

The Bridge:

Rama called together the ministers and directed them to construct the bridge across the Ocean²⁰⁷. 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. (*SSS Vol.41 p.79*) Hanuman²⁰⁸ said, “Lord! Your Name is the bridge that can safely transport man across the Ocean of Life. Which bridge can be stronger and

²⁰⁶ See Chapter, *Vibhishana - Vibhishana joins Rama*

²⁰⁷ *RKRV Part II p.178*

²⁰⁸ See Chapter, *Hanuman - The bridge and the service of the Vanaras:*

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.” Rama smiled at the simple sincere loyalty and valour of these devotees. Jambavan reminded Nala and Nila of the assurance given by the unseen source, which was no other than the Ocean itself, about the use that can now be made of the curse they had drawn upon themselves while young. He directed them to install Rama in their hearts and throw hills, hillocks, mountains and rocks into the sea. At this, the Vanara heroes ran in all directions, and brought back entire hills on their heads and shoulders, as if they were as light as balls used for games. They stood in one long line and passed the hills from shoulder to shoulder, all the while repeating aloud the Name of Rama. *(RKRV Part II p.178)*

The Siege:

When Rama heard from Angada what had happened at Lanka and learnt from him the attitude and alertness of the enemy, he 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. *(RKRV Part II p.203)*

Jambavan suggests that Sushena be brought to treat Lakshmana:

Hanuman entered carrying the body of Lakshmana²⁰⁹ 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.” (*RKR V Part II p.211-212*)

Jambavantha’s encounter with Meghanada:

Jambavan saw him. “Oh you Vicious Worm! Stop,” he cried. Meghanada²¹⁰ brushed him aside, saying, “Fie on you, I had ignored you so far, as too old to deserve attention. Of what avail are your words to me? Move away.” He threw a trident at Jambavan, which was luckily caught by him and thrown back at Meghanada himself. The aim was so correct and the throw was so forceful, that the trident hit him straight on the heart. The wounded man circled round himself a few times and fell on the ground. Jambavan rushed to where he fell. He held the feet together and swung him round very fast before he dashed him on the ground. “Now say whether I am an old man. Judge whether I have strength of youth or the weakness of old age.” Jambavan challenged Meghanada. Meghanada did not die. He rose with great difficulty and moved away. He had not fulfilled his boast,

²⁰⁹ See Chapter, *Hanuman* - Hanuman fetches the physician of Lanka:

²¹⁰ See Chapter, *Meghanada*

and so, he felt ashamed to show his face before his father. He went straight to a garden named Nikumbala, where many Rakshasas had performed penance and endured austerities in the past. (*RKRV Part II p.230*)

THE CORONATION:

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. (*RKRV Part II p.282*)

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. (*RKRV Part II p.335*)

ANALOGUE:

In the Ramayana of actual life, Atma is Rama, Manas is Lakshmana, Brahmajnana is Sita; and when that Sita is lost, Rama falls into the forest of existence; there, in that forest, there are Despair and Discrimination. If we

associate ourselves with Hanuman or Courage, we can go across the sea of delusion, with the army of zest, strength and steadfastness represented by Jambavan, Angada and other Vanaras. (*Sandeha Nivarini p.93*)

Man alone can rise through effort to higher stages of spiritual evolution. No other animal can do so. Animal trainers of the Circus can train a tiger to perform various tricks, but they cannot change its nature. They cannot make it live on grass and completely deprive it of meat. But man is different. His nature can be changed by means of his own disciplined effort. He can control, by his will, the evil thoughts and ideas that arise in his mind. This is why birth as a human being is considered a rare gift.

-Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

12.3 JATAYU AND SAMPATHI

JATAYU AND SAMPATHI

In the Hindu epic Ramayana, Jatayu is the son of Aruṇa and nephew of Garuda. A demi-god who has the form of a vulture, he was an old friend of Dasaratha (Rama's father). He tries to rescue Sita from Ravana when Ravana is on his way to Lanka after kidnapping Sita. Jatayu fought valiantly with Ravana, but as Jatayu was very old Ravana soon got the better of him. As Rama and Lakshmana chanced upon the stricken and dying Jatayu in their search for Sita, he informs them of the fight between him and Ravana and the direction in which Ravana had gone (i.e., south).

Jatayu and his brother Sampathi, when young, used to compete as to who could fly higher. On one such instance Jatayu flew so high that he was about to get seared by the sun's flames. Sampathi saved his brother by spreading his own wings and thus shielding Jatayu from the hot flames. In the process, Sampathi himself got injured and lost his wings. As a result, Sampathi lived wingless for the rest of his life.

- *From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia*

JATAYU

Jatayu²¹¹ - A famous eagle, whose wings were scorched when he flew too close to the sun. He tried to rescue Sita, and he played a role in Rama's fight against the demons. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

SAMPATHI

Sampathi²¹²: Huge, aged eagle brother of the noble Jatayu. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

BROTHERS

Sampathi and Jatayu are brothers. (*RKRV Part II p.115*)

JATAYU, A FRIEND OF DASARATHA:

The old Eagle Chief, Jatayu was a great friend of Dasaratha accompanying him on his spatial expeditions to help the denizens of Heaven. (*RKRV Part II p.18*)

BECOMES A FRIEND OF RAMA:

They (*Rama, Sita and Lakshmana*) sought a spot where they could reside therein and soon arrived at the place known as Panchavati, which Agastya had indicated. They saw there... Jatayu. Rama related to the Eagle the sad news of the death of

²¹¹ Also spelt as Jataayu

²¹² Also spelt as Sampaathi

Dasaratha and alleviated his sense of loss and bereavement. Rama told him about himself, and spoke to him about Sita and Lakshmana, and of his other brothers. They were set on rigging up a thatched hut on the banks of the Godavari. Jatayu became a close friend, and through him they could acquire a clearer picture of the region. That night, they spent the hours under a tree in sound and refreshing sleep. (*RKRV Part II p.18*)

SITA'S ABDUCTION

Jatayu hears the cries of Sita:

The monarch of eagles, Jatayu, heard the plaintive cries that rose from that moving chariot. He recognised the voice as that of Sita. He realised that Sita was in the chariot of Ravana. He grieved over his age, which made him too weak to fight Ravana, the villain who was taking her away. He felt that it would be wrong not to hinder him. He knew that no act of service can be nobler than rescuing a woman from the clutches of a fellow who was kidnapping her from her lord and master. He resolved to sacrifice his life, if need be, for the holy act of saving Sita from the demonic grasp, and using all his energy and skill for that act of service.

Jatayu consoles Sita and tries to rescue her:

Circling overhead, Jatayu shouted, "O Sita! Have no fear, I shall destroy this cruel villain and release you. I shall place you in the Presence of Rama." He flew across the chariot's path, and hit Ravana many times with his sharp beak, causing him to bleed profusely. He beat the chariot with his wings and attempted to stop it by creating a terrific wind that would retard its speed.

Even while on his wings, he gave Ravana excellent advice to correct himself, before it was too late.

Advices Ravana:

“Ravana! This is a step that would bring you no good. Release Sita and go safely home. Or else, like moths that fall into fire, you and your brood will be burnt in the fire of Rama’s anger. Your pride will cause your total ruin. To kidnap another’s wife is a heinous sin. Only a sinful heart will yearn for another’s wife and wander in search of her. Only base brutes, worse than dogs or foxes, will descend to such depths. You are acting like one who is so mad that he cannot pay heed to what is in store for him. Consider, is there a more barbarous crime than this? Oh! What a sin have your parents done to be claiming you as their son? Your head has turned because you reckon on your physical strength, your riches and the peoples under your control. But listen, all these will go up in flames and be reduced to ashes. Even the powers you have achieved through your austerities will be destroyed in a trice. Will you remain calm and inactive, when your wives are carried away or coveted by other Rakshasas? In fact, those who respect women, both those who are their wives and those who are not, will never invite this dread misfortune on their heads.”

Uttering these words of golden advice, Jatayu flew along with the speeding chariot for some distance; Sita derived great consolation listening to the words of Jatayu. She was comforted when she heard these sentiments so well expressed.



Figure 21: Jatayu Battles Ravana

Source of the Photo

Artist	Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906)
Title	English: Jatayu Vadham
Description	English: <u>Seetha</u> horrified seeing <u>Ravana</u> cutting <u>Jatayu's</u> wing.
Date	1895
Medium	oil on canvas
Current location	English: Sri Chitra Art Gallery, <u>Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.</u>
Source/Photographer	http://www.coolmags.net/art-paintings/raja-ravi-varma-paintings-part-ii-paintings-based-on-hindhu-mythology.html

Jatayu battles Ravana:

Jatayu succeeded in stopping the chariot and forcing Ravana to engage in battle with him, after making Sita dismount and helping her to sit under a tree. But age took its toll. He could not fight for long. He was soon overcome. But he was able, during the fight, to pull down the crown from his head and pluck a few bunches of hair. He pecked at his body so fiercely in so many places that he was turned into a mass of bleeding flesh. Jatayu's beak and widespread wings hurt Ravana a great deal and humbled his pride. As a last resort, Ravana drew his wheel-sword, and with its sharp edge, he cut off the wings of Jatayu, felling him helpless on the ground. Wings are as the very breath to eagles. So, he cried out in his agony the name of Rama and fell on the ground.

“I fought, with no reservations, in the cause of my Master; but, my struggle was of no avail. This too is the will of Rama. Rama must have planned all this, in order to confer some benefit on the world. Or else, can Sita be taken away by force by anyone, without His will designing the act? I have now only one prayer to Him. I must hold my breath at least until I meet Him and am able to convey this news to Him. I have nothing greater to do in this life.” So saying, he closed his eyes and was lost in prayer. Meanwhile, Ravana had placed Sita again in the chariot, and started off in great haste and with much commotion. Jatayu saw him moving past. He heard Sita crying out for help. Jatayu was sunk in anguish that he could not offer further resistance. He lay in a pool of his own tears, his heart yearning for Rama and his tongue whispering His Name.

“When death draws near, when calamity is a few steps off, nature behaves in an unexpected manner to warn and teach. Things behave topsy-turvy. This Ravana too, is behaving in this manner, since his end is near, and his kith and kin are about to be wiped off the face of the earth.” Jatayu realised this truth and lay there, keeping himself alive by his own will, awaiting the approach of Rama. (*RKR V Part II p.57-60*)

Rama and Lakshmana meet the wounded Eagle:

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 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. He found an eagle of truly regal mien lying on the ground, gasping for breath, but still repeating reverentially with eyes closed the Name it adored, “Rama, Rama.” The brothers walked straight to the bird and lovingly stroked its head and body. When the hand of Rama blessed it with the tender touch, the bird recovered some little strength. It opened its eyes and looked around. It saw the beautiful form of Rama that could captivate all the worlds. Suddenly it was overpowered by a flood of both joy and sorrow. The incapacitated bird could not move its limbs, nor could it turn

on its side. So it crawled a little forward and raising its head, placed it at the Feet of Rama. Rama placed the head on his lap and gently fondled it into awareness and activity.

Jatayu said in feeble accents, “Lord! While the wicked Ravana—yielding to maleficent motives, forsaking justice and uprightness, casting away powers acquired by years of asceticism—by carrying away Mother Sita, in a chariot, through this forest, as a dog goes in stealth and as a fox goes cunningly, the Mother of all the Worlds, the Daughter of Janaka wailed aloud, ‘Rama,’ ‘Rama,’ covering the entire forest in gloom. I heard the wail, but did not know who it was that raised the sad cry. I flew near and discovered to my great surprise and sorrow that Mother Sita was the person in distress! I could not remain quiet. Though old and decrepit, I pronounced your Name, and derived strength thereby and courage to give him battle. I pecked at him so furiously, that his body streamed with blood all over. He placed Sita in the shade of a tree and fought ferociously.

He drew his wheel-weapon and slashed my wings into shambles. I could not do anything to stop his onward journey with Sita. I lay here, weeping over my defeat, and waiting for your arrival. I am most unlucky, for, though I saw Mother being taken away by that ruffian, I could not save her.”

Rama Praises Jatayu’s help:

Jatayu shed tears of despair, as he spoke those words. Rama too displayed great interest and anxiety, and he addressed the bird thus: “Oh Chief of Birds! I shall never forget your help. The good deed you have performed will give you Bliss in the next

world. Do not feel sad.” Thus saying, Rama dusted its wings with his own matted hair²¹³, while Lakshmana hurried to bring some water to slake its thirst and refresh it. Rama poured the water drop by drop into the bird’s mouth. Jatayu was delighted at the good fortune and his face glowed with ecstasy.

Jatayu breathes his last:

Jatayu said, “Rama, I am luckier than even your father, for he did not have this chance of drinking water from your hands when he left this world. I could get my last sip from your golden hand! I could rest on your lap. I could drink nectar from your fingers. And while drawing my last breath, I could fill my eyes with the picture of your charming Lotus Face. I am certain I will be merging in you. Oh, I am indeed blessed.” Then, Jatayu spoke in feeble tones: “Rama! That vicious demon proceeded in the southern direction. Most probably, he must have reached Lanka. Therefore, go straight to Lanka, destroy that wicked fellow and then bring the Mother to your presence.” Jatayu could speak no more. *(RKRV Part II p.66-69)*

Rama placed Jatayu’s head on His lap and poured cool water down its throat²¹⁴. Drinking water from Rama’s hand, *he cried “Rama” just once and drew his last breath*²¹⁵. While Dasaratha

²¹³ Rama showed compassion to the dying eagle Jatayu, which had fought with Ravana when he was carrying Sita away to Lanka (*SSS Vol.20 p.54-55*)

²¹⁴ Dasaratha did not have the good fortune of drinking water from Rama's divine hands at the time of his death. But Jatayu was fortunate enough to be the recipient of such an act of grace in his last moments. (*SSS Vol. 32 part1 p.194*)

²¹⁵ *(RKRV Part II p.66-69)*

did not have the good fortune of attaining *Shubagati*, the heavenly state, Jatayu did while resting its head in Rama's lap. (*SSB 1996 p.46*)

Rama performs the last rites:

Rama allowed the vital breath of Jatayu to merge in Him. He performed the obsequies to the body of the bird and took the valedictory bath. After these rituals, he moved towards the south²¹⁶ picturing in his mind the regions of the South and the ordeals of Sita. (*RKR Part II p.66-69*)

Rama, the redeemer of the fallen

Rama was the redeemer of the *fallen---Pathithapaavana*²¹⁷. He redeemed and gave salvation to three characters in the *Ramayana*. They are Sabari, Guha and Jatayu. (*SSS Vol.25 p.184*)

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 Sita away he fought to the bitter end to rescue Sita from Ravana. When he fell mortally wounded and succumbed to the injuries, Lord Rama performed

²¹⁶ 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.47*)

²¹⁷ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Pathithapaavana - Teachings And Advice - PATHITHAPAAVANA*

the last rites for Jatayu, a service denied to his father Dasaratha.
(SSS Vol.25 p.185)

SAMPATHI

Story of Sampathi

A huge aged bird hopped up to the shore, in order to perform the last rites for its dead brother, and offer water sanctified by sesame grains, in the holy sea. The monkeys gathered around the new arrival and wondered whether it was a Rakshasa who had transformed himself into that form. The bird, however, started speaking first. It said, “Monkeys! My name is Sampathi. Jatayu and I are brothers. Eagles as we are, we both raced towards the sun in competition, years ago. My brother could not bear the scorching heat as we neared the Sun. He flew back. But a sense of pride induced me to continue the flight. As I proceeded stage by stage, my wings were burnt, and fell off. I dropped like a stone from the depth of the sky. A sage named Chandrama happened to pass that way and see my plight. He sat by my side and taught me a good deal of wisdom through his lessons. Listening to his precepts, my pride was destroyed. He told me, ‘Oh King of Birds! Listen to my words. In the Tretha Yuga that is coming, God Narayana is incarnating in human Form. His Consort will be carried by Ravana to an unknown place. An army of Vanaras (Monkeys) will proceed to trace her whereabouts. Your life will be rendered holy and worthwhile on seeing those emissaries of God engaged in their holy mission.

You can assure yourselves that it has been rendered so, because at that very moment, your wings will grow in strength. Your duty will be to communicate to them information regarding the place where Sita is kept.’ This day I came to this place by the sea in order to perform the last rites of my brother, Jatayu. Seeing you, I recollected the words of that sage uttered so long ago. Why? As soon as I recollected, see, his words have come true!”

At this, the Vanaras exclaimed excitedly, “Sampathi! Keep aside the story of your life. Our term is fast ending. Tell us quickly the clues to know where Sita is. Tell us what you know, what happened to her?” Sampathi lost no time in elaboration. He said, “Oh Vanaras! One day, when I was afflicted with uncontrollable hunger, I called my son, Suparna, to my side and told him, ‘Son, fly quickly. Get me some food. I am old. I am hungry. My wings too have fallen off.’ Seeing my plight, he flew into the forest, but did not return. My anxiety for him suppressed the pangs of hunger. At last, he appeared with some quantity of venison. My hunger made me forget the restraint natural to a wise being. I was enraged at the inordinate delay and I decided to pronounce a curse on my son. Fearing this, my son caught hold of my feet in supplication and said, ‘Father, I did not waste a single moment while away. Please listen to my prayer. Pardon me for the delay that was unavoidable.’ He placed the venison before me, and when my hunger was appeased by eating it, I asked him to relate to me the cause for the delay. He said, ‘When I was flying into the forest a person with twenty hands and ten heads was hurrying along. With him was a woman of indescribable beauty. She was weeping and wailing most pitiably. I knew it was a monster, and so I attacked him and saw the woman inside the chariot. She was

crying out just one Name, Rama! Rama! Rama! No other word emerged from her mouth. My futile attempts to stop his progress and to save that woman caused this delay.’

When I heard these words, I felt terribly ashamed that I had lost my wings and that I had grown old. I was overcome with grief. I guessed he must be a Rakshasa. So, I asked my son, in which direction that ten-headed monster was proceeding. He answered that he had taken the southern direction. Immediately, I exclaimed, ‘Alas! That monster is the Ravana, whom the sage had mentioned. That woman is the Divine Mother, Sita! There can be no doubt in this. That monster has stolen her like a dog, a fox, and he is running away with his prey.’ I gnashed my teeth in anger. What else could I do?” Thus, Sampathi explained what had happened and what he knew of the incident. “I have been awaiting the arrival of the army of Vanaras, as the Sage had informed me. I was hoping every day that they would be passing my way. Today, my prayer is answered. My life has been sanctified.”

Then, Sampathi announced, “Oh Vanaras! The City of Lanka is situated on the Triple-Peak-Hill by the shore of the sea. That City has many charming gardens and parks. There, Sita is in the Ashokavana, moaning her fate. She is awaiting your arrival. So, proceed further south.” Angada asked the bird, how it came to know that she was in the Ashokavana, under a tree grieving over her misfortune. Sampathi answered that the vision of the eagle does cover an area of 400 yojanas and that, had he not been handicapped by age, he would certainly have helped them even more in their mission. The problem now was crossing the ocean!

Sampathi said, “Oh Vanaras, you can achieve success in the task allotted to you by Rama if there is one among you who has the strength and the skill to leap a distance of 100 yojanas.” As he was saying thus, the wings of Sampathi grew and flapped a little. He could hop a slight distance and within a short time, he could actually fly. The words of the sage had proved true.

Sampathi was wonder struck at the regaining of the wings. He said, “Oh Brave Vanara heroes! To fulfil the command of Rama, you have carried out the search with great efficiency and enthusiasm, without allowing even hunger and thirst to hinder your efforts. You have evinced steady faith and deep devotion. You have risked your lives often, while engaged in the search. It is Rama who has been conferring endurance and strength on you. He is having His task executed by you. Your duty now is to contemplate on Him and pray to Him with a full heart. When that is done, you can see Sita without fail and give satisfaction to Rama. You can, with His Grace, leap over the ocean with ease, see Sita and bring joy to Rama’s heart. The joy that we cause in the heart of God is the only worthwhile achievement. What can we say of lives that do not offer this gift to God? Only those who live on the lines laid down by God and who by their acts carry out His Wish are valid. The rest are barren and futile. They only consume precious food and move about, burdening the earth.” With these words, Sampathi took wing and flew away.

The Vanaras who watched him fly aloft were struck with pleasant surprise at the sudden recovery of his powers. They said among themselves that Ramanama 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 and know things correctly.

Each of the monkey leaders started estimating its strength and leaping capacity. Meanwhile, Jambavantha addressed them thus. "Friends, old age has overwhelmed me. My skill and strength have declined. Somehow prodded by the joy of executing the commands of Rama and encouraged by His Blessings, I have been able to stay on till now and move about with you. I was in full possession of my strength and intelligence, and in the best adult stage of life, when the Lord incarnated as Vamana and demonstrated His Trivikrama Form." (*RKRV Part II p.114-119*)

CHARACTERISATION OF JATAYU

The value of gratitude

Rama expressed His deep debt of gratitude to the bird Jatayu, who gave up his life while trying to rescue Sita. (*SSB 1996 p.102*) 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! (*Bhagavatha Vahini New Edition p.271*)

The value of Love:

Pray to God with pure heart with a mind bereft of desires. Do not pray for the fulfilment of petty desires. Love God with a desireless heart. How did Sabari get the grace of Rama, who gave her liberation? How did Jatayu enjoy the privilege of dying on the lap of the Lord? (*SSS Vol.31 p.128-129*) Jatayu, a

bird, and an animal like Gajendra, the Lord of the Elephants, redeemed themselves by relying on the Lord's name. (SSS Vol.22 p.111-112)

The value of Total surrender to God:

God does not want anything from you. He never insists on your doing meditation or *yoga*. He only wants you to fill your hearts with principles of love and sacrifice. If you obey His commands with sincerity and devotion, He will take care of all your needs without your asking. The lives of Sabari and the bird Jatayu bear ample testimony to this truth. So you do not need to ask God for anything. If you have purity of heart, He will Himself take care of you, just like a mother who attends to the needs of the child without its asking. Be like a child, and the Divine Mother will take care of you. That is total surrender. Leave everything to the Will of the Mother. Do not ask²¹⁸ for petty things lest you should lose Her proximity. The one who asks for food will be directed to the kitchen, but the mother will feed the child herself who cannot ask. Only those with ego and those immersed in worldly life ask. But the one, who surrenders himself to the Will of the Divine Mother like a child, will lead a peaceful life. (SSS Vol.32 Part II p.158-159)

Victory can be won only with God's grace

Men should realise that without God's love, human existence is utterly valueless. A bird like Jatayu earned God's grace. (SSS Vol.25 p.125) Rama gave *moksha* to the bird Jatayu, (SSB 1974 Part II p.101) God knows for sure

²¹⁸ *Do not ask, O mind, do not ask. The more you ask, the more you will be neglected. God will certainly grant you what you deserve without your asking. Did He not grant the wish of Sabari, who never asked? Did He not redeem the bird Jatayu, who never asked but sacrificed his life for His cause? (Telugu Poem) (SSS Vol.34 p.47)*

An example: 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. (SSB 1995 p.25)

when, where, and how He should bless His devotee. Divine Grace is in proportion to the meritorious deeds that one performs. (*SSB 1996 p.46*)

Sadhu Guna:

Bhagawan said: “ By Sadhus, I do not mean monks and ascetics, who are indicated generally by that word. It means Sadhu Guna, goodness, uprightness, virtue; and these can be possessed by animals and even insects. Really speaking, the promotion of Satwa Guna (purity) is the best means of fostering Sadhus. The Avatar is the embodiment of this sacred guna and so It fosters it, wherever it is found. But since Sanyasins (ascetics, monks) are striving to earn it, they are called sadhus and supposed to be specially blessed by the attention of the Lord.

“But they are not the only Sadhus. All those who follow *Sadachara* (good conduct), who have *Sadseela* (good practices), who adhere to Sathya (truth) who yearn for the *Sannidhi* (Presence) of Sarveswara (the Lord), who observe *Saddharma*, who consider *Sarvajana* (all) as *Samaana* (equal); all of them are Sadhus. Such characteristics are found among the animals and birds even. In the *Ramayana*, Jatayu (eagle) was saved as a result of this Guna. That is the reason why the elephant was blessed and the monkeys were given a chance to serve and be blessed with His Grace. The same reason prompted the Lord to bless the squirrel. A Sadhu is not made by a string of beads, an ochre robe and a stick in the hand. The clothes one wears and the language one has on the tongue do not decide who is a Sadhu and who is not. It is the Guna that settles it. All animals have the potentiality to be good. So fostering goodness in all is the best means of ensuring the welfare of the world. (*Geetha Vahini p.71-72*)

12.4 SABARI



Figure 22: Salvation of Sabari

Summary of the Photo (from Wikipedia)

Artist Balasaheb Pandit Pant Pratinidhi (author dead before 1952 (April 13, 1951) - see

Title Shabari's Hospitality

Description Rama and Laxman continue their search for Sita, moving southwards. An old woman Shabari, who had heard about the virtues and valour of Rama, was waiting to offer him berries, she collected from forest-shrubs. Rama received her gift cheerfully and blessed her. It is said that Shabari actually tasted each of the berries to make sure they were ripe and perfect for consumption by Rama.

Date 1916

Source/Photographer

- Chitra Ramayana
- <http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/mythology/ramayan/30028.htm>

SABARI

Sabari was one of the woman saints in Ramayana period, She belonged to the hunters tribe and was attached to Sage Mathanga ashram, right from her youth. She used to pick fresh tasty fruits and keep them on way of Sage Mathanga, but stayed away from Sage and the other ashram-dwellers. When sage asked the ashrammates about the person who did this painstaking service, she presented herself and joined in that ashram. Before Mathanga attained Heavenly abode, he told Sabari that Lord Rama would come to ashram shortly and bless her. Thus it is believed that the sweating of Mathanga's disciples transformed as flowers then. Sabari was then waiting for Rama's arrival in the same hermitage.

- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

SABARI

Sabari²¹⁹: A woman ascetic living in the hermitage of her teacher, Sage Mathanga²²⁰; Rama gave her salvation. (*Glossary of the Vahinis*)

²¹⁹ Also spelt as Shabaree (*Glossary of the Vahinis*), Sabari

²²⁰ Mathanga: A great sage; it is he who cursed Vali. (*ibid*)

Sabari was a helpless and hapless old woman with no one to look after her. Her preceptor (*Sage Mathanga*) told her about Lord Rama. She was yearning for the arrival of Ramachandra whom she considered to be her saviour²²¹. She was deeply absorbed in the contemplation of Rama's name at all times and in all places. (*SSS Vol.25 p.184-185*) Sabari was a great devotee of Rama. (*SSB 1996 p.53*)

Sabari was an illiterate old woman. (*SSS Vol.19 p.147*)

Her master, Sage Mathanga²²², at the time of casting away his body, had told her that Rama and Lakshmana would come there, and that she should wait for their arrival. (*SSB 1996 p.53*) Sage Mathanga 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". (*SSS Vol.25 p.184*) Though extremely old, she held on to life in order to obey the command of Sage Mathanga, and to receive Rama and Lakshmana in the hermitage. (*SSB 1996 p.53-54*)

²²¹ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, *Pathithapaavana - Teachings And Advice - PATHITHAPAAVANA*

²²² Sage Mathanga was a great ascetic. He taught the woman Sabari, the secret of the sacred doctrine of Brahman. (*Jnana Vahini p. 28*)

Sabari's story of how she came to stay at the Hermitage:

How she came to Mathanga Rishi and stayed at the hermitage is a very interesting story. Her marriage was arranged by her parents, and as was the custom among the Adivasis, a goat was to be offered to the tribal Goddess, on the night previous to the ceremony, in order to win the Grace for the couple. When Sabari came to know about this slaughter, she wept, and fell at the feet of her parents, praying to them to save the goat. She asked, "How can our married life be happy, when the dying bleat of this goat is the prologue?" But, the father pushed her aside and proceeded with the cruel rite. That night, Sabari stole out of that den of torture, and hid herself in the depths of the jungle that was not far off.

When day dawned, her parents as well as the groom's party were plunged in grief and anxiety; they combed the area, even where she was lying low amidst the thick bushes, and they went back, saying among themselves, "She could not have gone to the hermitage, for no woman would be given asylum there". She heard these words and so, she concluded that the hermitage was the safest place for her. She felt that some monk will take pity on her, and not send her back. Mathanga espied her and gave her permission to be in his habitation²²³. He told her that God in

²²³ Many of his disciples who were renunciants raised objection. But the noble Mathanga recognized the extraordinary merit of Sabari's chastity, sincere devotion, and dedication toward pursuit of liberation and admitted her to his *ashram*. She finally proved to the world how devoted

the Form of Sri Rama was coming to the hermitage someday, since he has been exiled into the forests for 14 years and He is eager to save the monks and seekers doing Tapas in the forests from the ravages of the demonic enemies of peace! Rama, he said, was proceeding from one region to another, with His consort, Sita and His brother, Lakshmana.

From that day Sabari had no other thought than of Rama, no other desire than the desire to have the Darshan of Rama, the chance to touch His Feet and the opportunity to speak with Him. Her heart was saturated with the Ramarasa, the sweetness of, the 'Rama Principle. She had no other Japam or Dhyana or' spiritual She spent her time, preparing' for the visit of Rama to the hermitage; just as she cleaned the paths, she cleaned her heart, too. Pebbles and thorns disappeared from both, through her efforts. She walked through the undergrowth, and removed overhanging creepers and briars, for she .imagined Rama would not have combed His hair' and it might get caught. She broke the lumps of earth, for she feared the tender soles of Sita would be hurt when she walked over them. (*SSS Vol.7 p.380-383*)

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

she was to Rama and how she got liberated after worshipping Him true to the teachings of sage Mathanga. (*SSS Vol.31 p.117*)

the fruits were sweet, she would taste them first and keep only the sweetest ones for her Lord. (*SSS Vol.25 p.184-185*)

She.... kept them every day, for no one knew when Rama will arrive! And, she took no risks. She tasted every fruit, whether it was bitter, sour or sweet, so that Rama could eat the best. She smoothened the surface of all stones that lay by the side of the' tracks in the jungle for, she expected Rama, Lakshmana or Sita to sit upon anyone of them when they got tired of walking. She hoped that one of them would rest awhile. on one of the rocks she had polished with great care. Thus her heart became Rama *hrudhaya* (Rama's heart). (*SSS Vol.7 p.380-383*) 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. (*SSS Vol.25 p.184-185*)

Sabari's story of meeting Rama and Lakshmana:

Rama, the large-hearted lover of all, moved on from that spot, walking on foot, with his brother as sole companion. They soon came across an old woman—she had a stoop. Her head could not be held erect. Her eyesight had become dull. Her hands were quivering. She was coming towards them, with a basket of fruits on her head! She saw the charming figures of the brothers and inferred that they were the two, who were described with excitement and delight by the rishis of the forest! Placing the basket on the ground, she stood on the track, whispering “Rama” “Rama” in reverence and thankfulness. Lakshmana guessed that this too was an impersonation by some wily Rakshasa to harm them. But Rama knew that his guess was wrong. He proposed to

sit under a nearby tree, the tree that was adjacent to the very hermitage where the old woman was residing. Sabari, the old woman, noticed the lotus-petal-like eyes, the ringlets of hair on their foreheads, the long arms that reached down to the knees, and the dark-blue complexion of Rama. She could contain her ecstasy no longer. She could not suppress her adoration. She ran forward and fell at the feet of both. She asked, “Where are you coming from? What are your names?” Rama replied, smilingly and coolly: “Mother! We are coming from Ayodhya. We are residing in the forest. I am called Rama. This brother of mine is known as Lakshmana.” At this, Sabari exclaimed, Father! My long cherished desire has been fulfilled, I have been waiting for your arrival, day and night, and looking for you into the distance, until my eyes have become dull and insensitive. I have achieved success. My longing has had its result. My vigil and fasts have borne fruit. Ah! I have been rewarded! This is the result of my Guru’s Grace. This is the mysterious working of God.” She brought the basket near Rama. Meanwhile, Rama asked her, “Mother! You speak of a Guru. Who is he, this Guru of yours?”

She said, “His name is Mathanga Rishi. But since women are not taken as pupils in the hermitage, I listened to the lessons, hiding behind bushes and trees. I served my guru and other *rishis*, removing the thorns from the tracks that led to the rivers where they take their bath, mostly by rolling over the ground, for I had to do it pretty early, before dawn. I also removed the pebbles and stones that might hurt their feet. I lived on fruits and tubers as the other pupils did. I served the masters unseen, and spent my days in the recesses of the jungle. Mathanga, the Mahatma, who knew the yearnings of my mind, told me one day, “Mother! Your body

has a ripe old age. If you strain so much, you will soon be exhausted. So, come inside in the hermitage and take good rest. While I was spending my days thus in the service of this hermitage, the rishi desired to quit the body and called me beside him. He said, ‘Sabari! The task on which I have come is over. I have resolved to leave this body now. You shall remain in residence at this hermitage itself. Within a short time Rama will come into the forest. Invite him to enter the hermitage and offer what little service you can to him. Let this hermitage be sanctified by the touch of his feet.’ I protested a great deal. I told him how I could never be happy in the hermitage without him. I prayed to him to take me too, through death to where he was proceeding. My Guru was not in a mood to accede to my wishes. He said that I had to be here awaiting the arrival of Rama and that I could not avoid that responsibility or lose the joy. From that day, I exist here, with arms outstretched to welcome you, with eyes watching the horizon, and carrying with me the decrepit body, so that I may live to see you and serve you. Oh Rama! Lord! Oh compassionate of the Afflicted, Oh Dweller in the hearts of Rishis! The wish of my Guru has been fulfilled. The hermitage is just a few feet off. Please sanctify it by entering it.” Sabari fell at Rama’s feet and entreated him to accede to the last request of her Guru.

Rama was naturally happy at the dedication and devotion of the old woman. He was the very embodiment of spontaneous surging love. So, he rose and walked towards the hermitage with his brother, Lakshmana, entering it. Sabari was overcome by a flood of joy. The flood broke all limits and expressed itself in ecstatic thrill and speech. The gem among women was until the moment

too weak to tread a few paces. Now, she found herself endowed with strength of a thousand elephants! She marched buoyantly to the river and brought, in quick time, cool limpid water that was eminently sweet. She tasted first the fruits she chose from the basket and she offered to the brothers those found sweet and ripe. While they ate, she looked happily and with gratitude at their charming face, and faces, and when they had finished, she washed their feet and placed on her head the drop of water sanctified by the contact. “Lord, I have no more desire. For what shall I live on? I survived until now for that one piece of good fortune – the Darshan of Rama. I have had the Darshan. Now, save me by merging this life, this breath, in Thy Lotus Feet, I have heard glory extensively from the sages and saints. Today, I have witnessed it. I am full of gratitude and joy.” Rama relished the fruits she offered with so much devotion. While partaking of them he said, “Mother! These fruits are as sweet as you own heart. Really, these are not fruits that grow on trees. Why, the wild fruits that grow in jungles are not sweet so sweet at all. They can never be. These fruits have grown on the holy tree of life, on branches of the pure mind, in the sunshine of love.” Rama ate the fruits extolling their taste all the time.

Lakshmana appreciates the devotion of Sabari:

Seeing Rama in this mood, Lakshmana was happy beyond words; for Rama had not eaten fruit with such joy since long. All these days Lakshmana had to persuade him to taste a few, with a good deal of parley, pleading and praying, even after the fruits were peeled, cut and placed before him. Rama was so afflicted by separation from Sita. In spite of all efforts of Lakshmana, Rama would eat only half a fruit or so. Never was Lakshmana

was satisfied with the quantity that his brother ate. Today, Sabari gave him fruits which had dropped ripe from the trees. She used to dust them and clean them and keep them for him every day, and when Rama did not arrive she consumed them herself as sacramental food, given to her by Rama himself! Day after day, she roamed the forest in search of sweet ones to be placed before Rama. Thus, daily the fruits were saturated with her love and devotion and the fruits became doubly desirable. Lakshmana noticed that this was the reason Rama was eating them with joy. He was filled with delight and he admired the devotion of Sabari that was so richly rewarded. He appreciated the divine joy that had filled herself with as a result of her long years of spiritual study and practice.

Rama’s Teachings and Advice on nine-fold devotion –“I relish the sweetness of devotion saturated with love. I seek only that”:

Sabari stood with folded hands before Rama and said, “Lord, I am of low caste. I am untutored intellect, dull and stupid. I am not learned in any sacred art or text. I am lower than the lowest. How can I extol you or describe your glory? I have no skill in the use of the words. I have not cultivated my Reason. Nor have I practiced austerities prescribed to gain insight into Divinity. I am on the lowest step in spiritual Sadhana. My only strength is my love for God. I have no other support or sustenance.” She spoke of Rama’s compassion, in accepting her offering. “Your grace is boundless,” she said. Rama was listening to her words intensely. He lifted her chin and looked right into her eyes. He said: 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. More than all the powers gained by spiritual disciplines and austerities, I relish the sweetness of devotion saturated with love. I seek only that. A man who has no love in him is as a barren as a cloud with no moisture, a tree with no fruits, or a cow yielding no milk, he is ever far from God and can never earn Grace. Sabari! Of the nine ways of evincing and cultivating devotion, I only desire that anyone be followed consistently by man. But I find you have followed to the very end all the nine ways. So, I do not see any one higher than in your attainment. I am in deed elated in all manner of ways, for you have offered me devotion that is pure, steady, and selfless and which is Love springing from the heart and surging from it in all directions and towards all beings. You have not cast aspersions on anyone, even while dreaming! That is what makes your mind so pure. Your mind does not blossom when ‘good’ comes to you. Nor does it wither, when ‘bad’ comes. You are blessed in all ways.”

Sabari drank in these words of counsel that Rama spoke to her. She said, “Rama! There is no path for the devotee other than doing one’s best to please the Divine, is there? I do not crave for aught else. This day, my father, my God, the Lord of my life, the Lord of all the Worlds, the Lord of all Creation has appeared before me! How can I measure my good luck, Oh Lord of Janaki, of Sita, the daughter of Janaka?”

At this she remembered Sita, and the brothers too, suddenly realized the plight. Rama told her, “Alas, Sabari, all this while you kept us happy, rid of anxiety, floating in joy; but now you have plunged us in grief.” Sabari was struck with remorse. She

raised her head in consternation and pleaded, “Lord! What is this you say? Pardon my indiscretion,” and she fell at the feet of Rama.

What Guru Rishi Mathanga has taught her – Sita Principle- Sabari develops inner Fire of Yoga and reduces her body to ashes – her breath merges in the Rama:

Rama asked her, “Sabari! Do you know anything about Sita? Have you heard anything about her? Sabari replied, “Don’t I know! Don’t I know about Sita? No woman who knows the Rama Principle will be ignorant of the Sita Principle that Gem of womanhood that Crown of virtue that Light of femininity? Oh, what great good fortune is hers! She is the very shadow of my Rama! Rama, I must tell you what my Guru Rishi Mathanga has taught about the Sita principle. Of course, there is nothing you do not know. But since you asked me now, whether I knew anything about Sita, I shall tell you what I know. ‘Rama deluded the minds of Manthara and Kaikeyi, in order to fulfil his mission of destroying the Rakshasa brood.’ As a result of this, my Guru told me ‘Sita, Rama and Lakshmana have entered the forest as exiles.’ He said, they would visit hermitages and bless the ascetics and that Rama would kill the demons who obstruct their rituals and disciplines. He said that Rama would devise a plan by which Ravana, who is knit strongly with the Rakshasa clans, will be tempted to enact a role in a dream centring around the ‘abduction’ of Sita! He assured me that the Sita abducted by Ravana is only a pseudo-Sita and not the real, genuine Mother. He had told me that Rama would come into this forest, while searching for the Sita who has been abducted and that, I would be rewarded as never before by that visit. My Guru also told me

that Rama would cultivate an alliance with Sugriva, who had taken refuge in the Rishyamuka Hills (adjacent to this hermitage) from the deadly depredation of his elder brother, Vali. Rama would accomplish the task of seeking out Sita through Sugriva. Rama! You are the Director of this Cosmic Drama, which you have designed. The incidents of your Drama were known to my Guru and he has revealed them to me. Your stage is the entire Cosmos. Your will decides the future of the Universe. It ensures the stability and progress of the Universe. All that happens is the unrolling into action of your Will; without it, nothing great or small can ever happen.

“Lord, you are acting in this play, as if you are unaware of your own plot. You are pretending to be grief-stricken at separation from Sita! Only those who are foolish, or who have no faith in the Atmic reality, or who are atheists can take it as true. Those who are aware of Divinity and its mysteries, those who are devotees and Sadhakas seeking to know God as their own Reality, will not be led away into the belief that it is genuine. You are the Doer of all that is done. No one however powerful can hinder or oppose your Will. You *will* the reactions of people to all happenings as good or bad. They are not the authors thereof. The ignorant may assert that they are the executors of their deeds. Rama! Pardon my impertinence. I have spoken too much in your presence.” Thus saying, she fell at the feet of Rama. She developed the inner Fire of Yoga and as a result, her body was reduced to ashes, while her breath was merged in the Rama-principle she adored. (*RKR Part II p.70-78*) *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 Rishyamuka²²⁴.

INNERPERCEPTIONS

Handicaps in the path of faith: Egoism is the mightiest enemy

Egoism is the mightiest enemy that has to be overpowered and destroyed. When Rama was proceeding from one hermitage to another in the forest, the Rishis who were expecting Him to visit them made elaborate preparations to receive Him; they prepared lists of grievances to be presented to Him, and hoped to win His grace by competitive pomp and adulation, by exhibition of superior asceticism! The old woman, Sabari who was the attendant of the sage Mathanga, was told by her dying master, that Rama will be passing that way and so, she longed in sincere anguish that she must be spared until she could wash the Lotus Feet of Rama with her tears. The Rishis sneered at her audacity and laughed at her foolish hope, Rama visited the hermitage of the egotistic ascetics on his way; they read out the verses of welcome they had composed; they presented a petition in which they had listed atrocities committed by the Rakshasas; they complained that the river water which was their only source of supply was contaminated and had become undrinkable. Rama told them in His reply, that the water will be rendered pure and potable as soon as they stop reviling Sabari and start appreciating her simple, sincere yearning for God. Sabari had strong and steady faith; that was enough to bring Rama to her lowly hut. Austerity, scholarship, power, authority, experience, riches – these are handicaps that obstruct the acquisition of that simple, sincere faith that God will accept. (*SSS Vol.6 p.143-144*)

Sai Baba's advice to Bala Vikas teachers giving the example of Sabari:

The children of the Sathya Sai Bala Vihar (now Bala Vikas) must know the Sathya Sai is residing in their hearts. Teachers also must take it as a

²²⁴ *SSB 1996 p.54*

Puja of Sai Rama. How to reveal the Sai Ram is residing in the hearts to the children? – That is the problem that must be directing your work. Sai Ram has to move about in the jungles of your heart; so, render the tracks, wide and smooth, free from thorn and pebbles.

Sabari’s high level of *sadhana*:

Sabari was so immersed in Rama that the ascetics (*of Sage Mathanga Ashram*) lost all awareness of her sex; they allowed her to remain in the hermitage after Mathanga related to them her high level of *Sadhana*. Mathanga also left this body and gave up his hermitage to Sabari, saying, you alone deserve to when Rama arrives!

The *Sadhana* that Sabari did to earn the bliss of serving Rama, you do, when you serve Sai Rama in these children. By this service, you realise the Self. (*SSS Vol.7 p.382-383*)

God’s Grace will overflow, unasked:

Many sages begged Rama for favours and waited for Him in their hermitages. Instead of rewarding them, Rama chose to go 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.25*)

Strong faith is enough to bring God to the devotee

Egotism is the mightiest enemy that has to be overpowered and destroyed. When Rama was proceeding from one hermitage to another in the forest, the *rishis* (sages) who were expecting Him to visit them made elaborate preparations to receive Him; they prepared lists of grievances to be presented to Him, and hoped to win His Grace by competitive pomp and adulation, by exhibition of superior asceticism! The old woman, Sabari, who was the attendant of the sage Mathanga, was told by her dying master that Rama will be passing that way and so, she longed in sincere anguish that she must be spared until she could wash the Lotus Feet of Rama with her tears. The sages sneered at her audacity and laughed at her foolish hope.

Rama visited the hermitage of the egotistic ascetics on his way; they read out the verses of welcome they had composed; they presented a petition in which they had listed the atrocities committed by the *Rakshasas* (demons); they complained that the river water which was their only source of supply was contaminated and had become undrinkable. Rama told them in His reply that the water will be rendered pure and potable as soon as they stop reviling Sabari and start appreciating her simple, sincere yearning for God. Sabari had strong and steady faith; that was enough to bring Rama to her lowly hut. Austerity, scholarship, power, authority, experience, riches--these are handicaps that obstruct the acquisition of that simple, sincere Faith that God will accept. (*SSS Vol.6 p.143-144*)

Sabari..... examples of devotees who got God's grace through their deep devotion, without any other special qualification. (*SSS Vol.19 p.161*)

Follow the path of Devotion:

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 item²²⁵.

"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? (*Prema Vahini p 51/54*)

The significance of devotees' offerings to the Lord

In the field of devotion, there is room for making certain offerings to God. God utilizes the acceptance of such offerings to reward the devotee a hundred-fold. Devotees should recognize the significance of such acceptance by the Divine. For instance, the Lord asked Kuchela what he had brought for Him. The Lord as Vamana asked for three feet of land from Emperor Bali. In the Rama Avatar, He went to Sabari and asked her to appease His hunger. All that

²²⁵ Under Section, *Rama*, See Chapter, **Pathithapaavana - Teachings And Advice - Rama's commentary on Bhakthas and His Dasas:**

Sabari could offer to Rama were a few sweet berries collected from the jungle.

It is to shower His grace on the devotees that the Lord seeks small offerings from them. What does He need from any one when the whole cosmos is contained in Him? It is the Lord who protects one and all in innumerable ways. There is a simple way to secure the grace of God. You must get near to God. Surrender yourself to Him. Become one with Him. Instead of following this easy path, man today immerses himself in petty desires and keeps away from God. There is no trace of selfishness in it. But, because of their own selfish natures, they attribute selfishness even to God's love. This is merely a reflection of their own nature. God's love is not a reflected love. It is love pure and simple. A reflected love carries the taint of the original. That is not the case with the Divine love, which is pure and unsullied. (*SSS Vol.31 p.61-62*)

Sabari was a tribal woman, illiterate and uncivilised. But all of them had won God's Grace in abundance, because of their wholehearted devotion, love and surrender. Follow the example of Sabari, who always thought of Sri Rama and His happiness, and dedicated all her thoughts, words, and deeds to Him alone, so much so that every action of hers was transformed and sublimated into the highest *thapas* (penance.) From her example, you must learn the lesson that meditation does not mean sitting idle in a particular posture of the body, as if you are posing for a photograph. As in her case, your entire life must become a continuous meditation wherever you may be staying and whatever you may be doing. Whatever you eat or drink must be offered to God as *naivedya* or holy offering. In this manner, if you offer everything to the Lord, you will naturally be prevented from engaging yourself in bad actions or evil ways in your life. (*SSB 1990 p.87*)

True yoga lies in unifying your love with the Divine

Control of desires leads to sense control, which in turn leads to Divinity. Sage Patanjali said, "*Yogah chitta vritti nirodaha*," controlling the vagaries of the mind is *yoga* and allowing the senses to have their own way is *roga* (disease). Today's man has become a *rogi* (diseased one) because of lack of sense control. One should become a *yogi*, not a *rogi*.

Yoga is attained not by *bhoga* (worldly pleasures), but by *thyaga* (sacrifice). Once you attain *yoga*, you will never be afflicted with *roga*. *Yoga* does not mean leading the life of a recluse in a forest. Some people mistake physical exercises like sitting cross-legged, standing on one leg etc., for *yoga*. True *yoga* lies in unifying your love with the Divine.

God does not want anything from you. He never insists on your doing meditation or *yoga*. He only wants you to fill your hearts with principles of love and sacrifice. If you obey His commands with sincerity and devotion, He will take care of all your needs without your asking. The lives of Sabari and the bird Jatayu bear ample testimony to this truth. (*SSS Vol.32 Part II p.158-159*)

Adugakuve O Manasa!
Adugu Koladi Adi Adugunu Padunani
Adugakunna Pani Vadigaanagunani
Adugani Sabarini Aadarinchade! (Telugu Poem)
 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!
 (*SSB 1995 p.24*)

O mind, do not ask for anything.
Ask, and it shall be delayed.
Do not ask, and it shall be granted soon.
Did He not shower His grace on Sabari, who never asked?
Did He not perform the last rites of Jatayu and
grant him liberation, without his asking?

So you do not need to ask God for anything. If you have purity of heart, He will Himself take care of you, just like a mother who attends to the needs of the child without its asking. Be like a child, and the Divine Mother will take care of you. That is total surrender. Leave everything to the Will of the Mother. Do not ask for petty things lest you should lose Her proximity. The one who asks for food will be directed to the kitchen, but the mother will feed

the child herself who cannot ask. Only those with ego and those immersed in worldly life ask. But the one, who surrenders himself to the Will of the Divine Mother like a child, will lead a peaceful life. (*SSS Vol.32 Part II p.158-159*)

Sabari describes Rama as a blemishless Moon:

The effulgence of the Lord is equal to that of one crore of 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 blemishless full moon. (*SSS Vol.27 p.134*)

Need for discrimination

Students! You are not being respected for your education, nor for your personality. You are being respected for your conduct. When a man's behaviour is good, he is respected without any enquiry. Did not Rama confer His grace on Sabari and Jatayu without their asking Him? But Rama did not respond to the entreaties of Dasaratha. Even the sages in the forests who were earnestly praying to him were not recognized by Rama. The Divine alone knows when and whom to bless, for what reason and where and in what form. You have to seek the Divine's grace in the right form, at the proper time and place. This calls for discrimination regarding time and circumstances. This is mostly absent today. This discrimination is called "Constant Integrated Awareness." It is described as "*Prajnaanam Brahma*," the humanness that is the Divine Itself. (*SSS Vol.28 p.149*)

12.5 SQUIRREL

SQUIRREL

When the Bridge to Lanka was being built, hundreds and thousands of monkeys and bears helped in the construction under the supervision of Nala and Nila. They uprooted trees and rolled down rocks from the mountains and threw them into the ocean. The army of monkeys and bears worked day and night chanting Rama's name.

As the work to construct the massive bridge was on, a small brown insignificant squirrel came to the shore. Wanting to participate in the Lord's work, she started to collect small pebbles in her mouth and dropped them near the boulders. Back and forth she ran working incessantly building a small pile. The monkey and bears, carrying huge boulders and trees saw the sight and burst of laughing mocking the work of the small squirrel. The squirrel had tears in her eyes but she continued her work with devotion and dedication. Seeing this, Lord Rama lifted the squirrel and acknowledging the contribution of the squirrel remarked that the bridge would be stronger due to her contribution. He gently stroked his hands on the squirrel's back and when he raised his hands the imprint of his three fingers were on her back – white lines on her brown fur. And ever since

then the squirrel has three white stripes on her back, as a token of Rama`s affection.

No work is big or small - since not the stature of work but any work, however small or menial, done with pure mind and sacred thought is what that matters. (DSS)

Bhagawan says about work - it must be karma, done with the full co-operation of the mind, gladly, intelligently, reverentially.

If one takes up a sacred task, one need not be concerned about the resources. There is no dearth of resources in our country, Bharat. But there are very few who have the noble intention of doing good to society. When you undertake a sacred task, even Nature will extend all its help. The sacred epic *Ramayana* stands ample testimony to this. When Rama, the embodiment of Dharma, was proceeding to Lanka to rescue His consort Sita, Nature extended all its cooperation. He was helped by monkeys and even by a small squirrel. (*SSS Vol.35 p 24*)

The Ramayana teaches that, when a person is yearning for the precious goal of self-realisation, all the forces of Nature and all Creation will help him and render all assistance. Monkeys, birds, squirrel, and even bounders²²⁶ and rocks were his (*Rama`s*)

²²⁶ The bridge towards Lanka was being built over the straits, so that Rama and His army could, march across to the realm of the demon King Ravana, where. Sita was interned. The valiant monkeys were plucking

comrades in the task. Aim high, resolve on the supremest adventure---everything will be set right to lead you on, to the goal²²⁷. (*SSS Vol.7 p.121*)

mountains and leaping vast distances in space with those peaks hoisted on their shoulders, so that they could be thrown into the sea to create a passage for Rama! The monkeys had formed a queue all the way from the Himalayas down to the southernmost point, where the bridge was fast coming up. When the causeway was completed, word went fast along the queue that no more hills are needed and each monkey placed on the ground, wherever it stood, the hill it had on its shoulder at the time.

Inanimate things too have emotions

One hill, however, did not sit quietly. It started bewailing its fate! "Why was I removed from where I was and why am I now refused? Alas! I was elated that I was destined to serve a Divine purpose; I was overjoyed that the armies of Rama and Rama Himself will walk over me. Now, I am neither there, nor where I was!" It shed profuse tears. News reached Rama, and His compassion was great. He sent word that in His next; *Avatar*, when He will come again upon His mission in human form, He will certainly bless the sorrowing hill. This was the Govardhana Peak which Rama (as the boy Krishna) lifted on His finger and held aloft for full seven days, in order to save the cowherds of Gokul from the deluge of rain that Indra dared inflict on them! (*Chinna Katha Part I CK8*)

²²⁷ We must try to discover and learn the means of progress. A poet sang, "Can canines conceive of colourful poetry? Or, donkeys know of the taste of the parched grains that we load on them? Or, a blind man admires the charm of the full moon?" We may well ask, how can a man sunk in relative knowledge become aware of *Atma* (the Absolute)? But there is no reason for despair, or for condemning ourselves as mean and low. For, when small men take big decisions, they earn encouragement from the great. When the tiny squirrel decided to share in building the passage across the sea, did it not receive the blessings of Lord Rama? The squirrel knew that its help could only be infinitesimal, but the feeling of dedication which prompted it won the grace of God. (*SSS Vol.16 p.10*)

Service is the best cure for egoism:

Service is the best cure for egoism; so, engage in it to relieve pain and grief to the extent that you can. In the Ramayana, apes brought huge rocks and threw them into the sea to build a passage across for Rama and His army; the tiny squirrel too helped, as far as it could: it rolled on the sands on the seashore, ran towards the heap piled as part of the passage, whisked the sand from its fur by a vigorous shake, adding only a pinch of material to the quantity heaped by the giant apes. Rama saw the squirrel; He appreciated its devotion; He took it fondly in His palm; he stroked its back tenderly, and with a blessing. That was ample reward. The squirrel race has since acquired three lines on its back; to indicate that sign of gratification and grace. Try to assuage, as far as you can, the distress of others; it is the best *sadhana* for the aspirant. (SSS Vol.6 p.118)

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You need not escape into a forest to gain silence and the chance of uninterrupted spiritual practice. You can make the place where you are, a citadel of silence; shut off the senses; let them not run after objects. Your home becomes a hermitage; your sadhana will then move on, without any obstacle.

- *Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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