

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the eighteenth part of the serial article, continuation from Jan 2023 newsletter.

Hanuman was asked to come and fight in the great Mahabharata battle. He said he could not fight, but he said he would come and sit there and watch. He sat on the top of Arjuna's chariot and watched the battle. The ferocious war between members of one family is described in the other epic's tens of thousands of verses. Hanuman was actually bored. Sitting there, he nearly fell asleep. He had seen the fight between Rama and Ravana, and nothing could compare. The battle between Rama and Ravana is exactly like the battle between Rama and Ravana. There is no comparison for it. Sky is sky, ocean is ocean, *brahman* is *brahman*, Rama-Ravana is Rama-Ravana. Hanuman thought of Kumbhakarna, Ravana's brother. When one of Kumbhakarna's hands was severed by Lakshmana, it fell down and took out hundreds of the battling monkeys. Just the one hand falling down slew hundreds. It was like a mountain landslide. This was the magnitude of the Rama-Ravana battle. They would pull trees as big as redwoods out of the ground and fight with each other. This was the *yuddha* that Hanuman had seen. Watching the combatants shoot arrows at each other, Hanuman did not consider war in the Mahabharata to be *yuddha*. Only when Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son, fought was there a flicker that got to Hanuman, something that was like a *yuddha*. Or when Arjuna and Bhishma fought it was like a *yuddha*. But only a short while these lasted. Hanuman would open his eyes and say, "Not bad." There was only one Rama-Ravana *yuddha*.

The slaying of ten-headed Ravana was not easy. Every time Rama turned to pay attention to a second head the one he had just dealt with came up again. They cropped up again and again. Arrow after arrow with the same result, and the fellow did not die. Again and again the mighty *rākṣasa* came back. Underneath all is Vedanta. Rama was slaying these heads which are exactly like desires. You remove one desire and in its place something else comes up. But that is not the only way to live. In fact the well-lived life is elsewhere; it has a cause. The cause is in the heart. Ravana's life is in the heart. For that, Rama had to use *brahmāstra*, and *brahmāstra* is *tattoamasi*. *Āstra* means that which goes from you is *āstra*. The teaching *tattoamasi* always goes from the teacher; it goes and strikes the heart. Then all the heads, this Ravana, are slain. There is no other way of eliminating this hydra-

headed, this *ahaṅkāra*. The Sita Rama got back, that Sita stands for peace. In-between, that Ravana will fight with you with all his minions. Kumbhakarna is *tamas*, and like this, in the form of *rākṣasas*, all these different kinds of *rajas* and *tamas*, your *rāgas* and *dveṣas*, will fight. They will fight to allow your self-image and your incomplete psyche to have their way with you. But that might not be the way to live. All the descriptions of the fight are to make them real. They are as real as the opportunity to learn and grow from what they represent. This is the trick. The Ramayana will lead you to yourself.

Tamas is dullness *et cetera*. Kumbhakarna was a fellow who used to sleep six months of the year. He did not bother to get up every day and shave. His life was like that. Still, we will see he did have a big shave when he did get up. Kumbhakarna size is like Vali size, hillock size. There is this story about Kumbhakarna. He woke up once with a six-month beard and he wanted a shave. He called all the normal-sized fellows together to lend a hand. It was a big job that took everyone's help. Each fellow took part. One fellow was there shaving one side of the mustache it seems - sitting there on Kumbhakarna's lip and then shaving. Just then Kumbhakarna sneezed. As the big guy took in his sneeze-breath, the razor went inside. It seems the razor went in. As a result, the shaving fellow was left without his tool, and he did not know what to do.

Kumbhakarna eyed him and said, "What are you doing? Are you just going to sit there?"

The fellow said, "Sir, the razor went inside."

"It went inside," remarked Kumbhakarna, "Well go and fetch it."

The fellow went inside, and he crossed valleys and mountains and things like that, and all strange things he saw. He searched all over but he could not find the razor. He got tired and he sat there on a rock on one of the hills. Sitting there resting, he noticed some other fellows approaching. They asked, "Hey, who are you? How did you come here?"

He said, "Well, I was shaving and then I lost the razor and I began searching for it. What are you doing here."

"We have been searching for some ghosts that were seen to have come in here, but we have not found them. Now you should just find your way out and get a new razor and start over."

Swamiji's story tells you how big this Kumbhakarna was. Kumbhakarna and his six-months sleep stand for *tamas*. Ravana stands for *ahaṅkāra, rajas et cetera*. Kumbhakarna and all the other *rākṣasa* fellows are to be managed and destroyed. Then the *ahaṅkāra* can be killed by the *brahmāstra*. Sita stands for *śānti*, peace, *ānanda* that is the *ātmā*. A mind that is enlightened is *sītā*. *Ātmā* is wedded to the mind but gets separated from the *sītā*. Sita is isolated somewhere because of the ocean between Sita and the *ātmā*, Rama. The ocean that is there is *ajñānam mohamāraṇam*, the ocean of ignorance and error that has to be crossed. In the story, that was crossed, and Ravana was met and destroyed, and Sita got back. This is the story behind the story.

There is wonderful verse written by Sadashiva, one of the wise men in South India in just the last century. He sings of Ravana and Kumbhakarna as *rāgas* and *dveṣas* and calls Rama the one who makes you cross the ocean of ignorance and error. It is Rama who is married to Sita, to *śānti*, and who is ruler of the kingdom called the heart, Ayodhya, which is limitless, which cannot be won over by anybody. "He dances, he revels, in my heart." Who dances? *Ātmā* – Rama. Because of whose knowledge the wise men are given back the limitless kingdom. That is Rama. His body is *sacchidānanda*. That is what gives you Sita. A *rākṣasa* is not going to leave a woman like Sita alone. All the people had mixed feelings when she returned. Rama could not read well all that was in their minds. He was shy to take her back after she had been in the hands of the *rākṣasa*. In order to prove that Sita could not be touched by Ravana or by any other, Rama had the demonstration done. It was a show and nothing else. Rama had no doubt about Sita's purity.

तामुवाच ततो रामः परुषं जनसंसदि । अमृष्यमाणा सा सीता विवेश ज्वलनं सती ॥ १-१-८२

ततोऽग्निवचनात् सीतां ज्ञात्वा विगतकल्मषाम् । कर्मणा तेन महता त्रैलोक्यं सचराचरम् ॥ १-१-८३

सदेवर्षिगणं तुष्टं राघवस्य महात्मनः ॥ बभौ रामः सम्प्रहृष्टः पूजितः सर्वदैवतैः ॥ १-१-८४

tāmuvāca tato rāmaḥ paruṣaṁ janasaṁsadi |

amṛṣyamāṇā sā sītā viveśa jvalanaṁ satī || 1-1-82

tato'gnivacanāt sītāṁ jñātvā vigatakalmaṣām |

karmaṇā tena mahatā trailokyam sacarācaram || 1-1-83

sadevarṣigaṇaṁ tuṣṭaṁ rāghavasya mahātmanaḥ ||

babhau rāmaḥ samprahrṣṭaḥ pūjitaḥ sarvadaivataiḥ || 1-1-84

Before all the people that were around, for their sake and not because he doubted her, Rama spoke harsh words to Sita, expressing the doubts of the others. Because of this, Sita, the one who was always one with her *pati*, Lord Rama, being one who could not stand those word from Rama, entered the fire, only to re-emerge. Everyone knew that she would come back again. Agni, the fire, did not burn Sita. In fact *agni*, the *devatā*, came forth holding Sita in his hands and gave her to Rama. All who were there heard the words of Agni declaring her virtue. Knowing Sita's nature, she who is free from any blemish, Rama became very happy because the others were convinced.

Having fully accomplished the job that he was to accomplish, Rama was worshipped by all the *devatās*. He had eliminated all the *rākṣasas* everywhere, and he had given them better *janmas*, better births, better *upādhis*, in fact. By him the great *karyakarma* which no other could do was done. All the moving and unmoving living beings, trees and plants and animals, were released. They were freed from the troublesome *rākṣasas* who intimidated them and ate them. The *ṛṣis* and *devas*, until now terrorized by the *rākṣasas*, could again live and visit in Dandaka forest without the threat of the demons. All three worlds were joyful due to the great action of the Raghava. Thereby, again, *dharma* was established. Rama came for that job; he was meant for that. He did his job. Sita and all the others were only accomplices for his job. This had been the negative part of it. What has to be negated has been done. The positive part had to come now. What has to be positively established is yet to come. Rama goes back and rules the kingdom in such a way that it is an example for any kingdom at any time.

अभिषिच्य च लङ्कायां राक्षसेन्द्रं विभीषणम् । कृतकृत्यस्तदा रामो विज्वरः प्रमुमोद ह ॥ १-१-८५

देवताभ्यो वरं प्राप्य समुत्थाप्य च वानरान् । अयोध्यां प्रस्थितो रामः पुष्पकेण सुहृदवृतः ॥ १-१-८६

भरद्वाजाश्रमं गत्वा रामः सत्यपराक्रमः । भरतस्यान्तिके रामो हनूमन्तं व्यसर्जयत् ॥ १-१-८७

पुनराख्यायिकां जल्पन् सुग्रीवसहितस्तदा । पुष्पकं तत् समारूढ्य नन्दिग्रामं ययौ तदा ॥ १-१-८८

नन्दिग्रामे जटां हित्वा भ्रातृभिः सहितोऽनघः । रामः सीतामनुप्राप्य राज्यं पुनरवाप्तवान् ॥ १-१-८९

abhiṣicya ca laṅkāyāṁ rākṣasendraṁ vibhīṣaṇam |

kṛtakṛtyastadā rāmo vijvaraḥ pramumoda ha || 1-1-85

devatābhyo varaṁ prāpya samutthāpya ca vānarān |

ayodhyāṁ prasthito rāmaḥ puṣpakeṇa suhṛdvr̥taḥ || 1-1-86

bharadvājāsramam gatvā rāmaḥ satyaparākramah |
bharatasyāntike rāmo hanūmantaṁ vyasarjayat || 1-1-87
punarākhyāyikāṁ jalpan sugrīvasahitastadā |
puṣpakam tat samārūhya nandigrāmaṁ yayau tadā || 1-1-88
nandigrāme jaṭām hitvā bhrātr̥bhiḥ sahito' naghah |
rāmaḥ sītāmanuprāpya rājyaṁ punaravāptavān || 1-1-89

The island Lanka had been left without a king and had to be properly reestablished. Ravana's brother Vibhishana had surrendered to Rama just before the war. Vibhishana in fact had advised Ravana to befriend Rama, to give back Sita, and not to fight. Vibhishana told his cruel brother not to wrong Rama. He told Ravana that what he was doing was wrong. He told Ravana to admit his mistake and to put himself at Rama's great mercy. He told him there was no other way out. Though Vibhishana was born in the family of the *rākṣasas*, he was a different kind of person. Even though he grew up as a *rākṣasa*, he was a *sādhu*. Ravana's reaction was to condemn Vibhishana and accuse him of being a coward. Ravana thus rebuked his brother, and thereafter Vibhishana went and surrendered to Rama. It is another very beautiful scene. There were rumors in Rama's camp that this Vibhishana should not be trusted and should not be given sanctuary. Many thought he was a spy who came to destroy Rama's troops. Everybody objected to Rama's accepting Vibhishana. But Rama said, "He has come to me for refuge and I will not reject him. Even if his intent is to undermine all of our efforts, still I will not reject him, for he has asked that I be his *śaraṇam*. He has come to me seeking my feet, and I am not going to deny him." Thus Rama accepted Vibhishana. Vibhishana became an integral part of Rama's victory.

After Ravana's death, Rama enthroned Vibhishana in Lanka in Ravana's place. All the terrible *rākṣasas* were gone, and all the *rākṣasīs* and lesser demons became normal under the rule of Vibhishana, king of *rākṣasas*. The coronation and the enthronement ritual were done. All Rama had to do in the forest was done. Half of Rama's life was over. Kaikeyi, Mandara, Shurpanakha, Marica, Hanuman: they were all *nimittas*, means for Rama to achieve this particular end. Now it is over, the negation is done, no longer is there anxiety over the course to be taken. Indeed, Rama became all happiness. Receiving all blessings and certain boons from the *devatās*, Rama gave back the lives to all the Vanaras who had died at the hands of Kumbhakarna and the other monsters.