

DASHAVATAR - Rama Avatar - Part 2



The next day, Bharata asked Rama to return to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom. But Rama firmly replied, "I cannot possibly disobey my father. You rule the kingdom and I shall carry out my pledge. I will come back home only after fourteen years." When Bharata realized Rama's firmness in fulfilling his promises, he begged Rama to give him his sandals. Bharata told Rama the sandals will represent Rama and he would carry out the duties of the kingdom only as Rama's representative. Rama gracefully agreed. Bharata carried the sandals to Ayodhya with great reverence. After reaching the capital, he placed the sandals on the throne and ruled the kingdom in Rama's name. He left the palace and lived like a hermit, as Rama did, counting the days of Rama's return.

When Bharata left, Rama went to visit Sage Agastha. Agastha asked Rama to move to Panchavati on the bank of Godavari River. It was a beautiful place. Rama planned to stay at Panchavati for some time. So, Lakshmana quickly put up an elegant hut and they all settled down.

Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, lived in Panchavati. Ravana was then the most powerful Asura king who lived in Lanka. One day Surpanakha happened to see Rama and instantly fell in love with him. She requested Rama to be her husband. Rama was amused, and smilingly said, "As you see I am already married. You can request Lakshmana. He is young, handsome and is alone without his wife." Surpanakha took Rama's word seriously and approached Lakshmana. Lakshmana said, "I am Rama's servant. You should marry my master and not me, the servant."

Surpanakha got furious with the rejection and attacked Sita in order to devour her. Lakshmana swiftly intervened, and cut off her nose with his dagger. Surpanakha ran away with her bleeding nose, crying in pain, to seek help from her Asura brothers, Khara and Dushana. Both the brothers got red with anger and marched their army towards Panchavati. Rama and Lakshmana faced the Rakshasas and finally they were all killed.

Surpanakha was terror stricken. She immediately flew to Lanka to seek her brother Ravana's protection. Ravana was outraged to see her sister mutilated. Surpanakha described all that happened. Ravana was interested when he heard that Sita is the most beautiful woman in the world, Ravana decided to abduct Sita. Rama loved Sita very much and could not live without her.

Ravana made a plan and went to see Maricha. Maricha had the power of changing himself into any form he wanted along with the appropriate voice imitation. But Maricha was afraid of Rama. He still could not get over the experience he had when Rama shot an arrow that hurled him far into the sea. Maricha tried to persuade Ravana to stay away from Rama but Ravana was determined. "Maricha!" shouted Ravana, "You have only two choices, help me to carry out my plan or prepare for death." Maricha preferred to die in Rama's hand than be killed by Ravana. So he agreed to help Ravana in the abduction of Sita.

Maricha took the form of a beautiful golden deer and began to graze near Rama's cottage in Panchavati. Sita was attracted towards the golden deer and requested Rama to get the golden deer for her. Lakshmana warned that the golden deer may be a demon in disguise. By then Rama already started to chase the deer. He hurriedly instructed Lakshmana to look after Sita and ran after the deer. Very soon Rama realized that the deer is not a real one. He shot an arrow which hit the deer and Maricha was exposed. Before dying, Maricha imitated Ram's voice and shouted, "Oh Lakshmana! Oh Sita,! Help! Help!"

Sita heard the voice and asked Lakshmana to run and rescue Rama. Lakshmana was hesitant. He was confident that Rama is invincible and the voice was only a fake. He tried to convince Sita but she insisted. Finally Lakshmana agreed. Before his departure, he drew a magic circle, with the tip of his arrow, around the cottage and asked her not to cross the line. "As long as you stay within the circle you will be safe with the grace of God" said Lakshmana and hurriedly left in search of Rama.

From his hiding place Ravana was watching all that was happening. He was glad that his trick worked. As soon as he found Sita alone, he disguised himself as a hermit and came near Sita's cottage. He stood beyond the protection line of Lakshmana, and asked for alms (bhiksha). Sita came out with a bowl full of rice to offer to the holy man, while staying within the protection line drawn by Lakshmana. The hermit asked her to come near and offer. Sita was unwilling to cross the line when Ravana pretended to leave the place without alms. As Sita did not want to annoy the sage, she crossed the line to offer the alms.

Ravana did not lose the opportunity. He quickly pounced on Sita and seized her hands, declaring, "I am Ravana, the king of Lanka. Come with me and be my queen." Very soon Ravana's chariot left the ground and flew over the clouds on way to Lanka.

Rama felt distressed when he saw Lakshmana. "Why did you leave Sita alone? The golden deer was Maricha in disguise." Lakshman tried to explain the situation when both the brothers suspected a foul play and ran towards the cottage. The cottage was empty, as they feared. They searched, and called out her name but all in vain. Finally they were exhausted. Lakshmana tried to console Rama as best as he could. Suddenly they heard a cry. They ran towards the source and found a wounded eagle lying at the floor. It was Jatayu, the king of eagles and a friend of Dasharatha.

Jatayu narrated with great pain, "I saw Ravana abducting Sita. I attacked him when Ravana cut my wing and made me helpless. Then he flew towards the south." After saying this, Jatayu died on the lap of Rama. Rama and Lakshmana buried Jatayu and then moved towards the south.

On their way, Rama and Lakshmana met a ferocious demon, called Kabandha. Kabandha attacked Rama and Lakshmana. When he was about to devour them, Rama struck Kabandha with a fatal arrow. Before his death, Kabandha disclosed his identity. He had a beautiful form which was changed by a curse to the form of a monster. Kabandha requested Rama and Lakshmana to burn him into ashes and that will bring him back to the old form. He also advised Rama to go to the monkey king Sugriva, who lived in the Rishyamukha Mountain, to get help in regaining Sita.

On his way to meet Sugriva, Rama visited the hermitage of an old pious woman, Shabari. She was waiting for Rama for a long time before she could give up her body. When Rama and Lakshmana made their appearance, Shabari's dream was fulfilled. She washed their feet, offered them the best nuts and fruits that she collected for years. Then she took Rama's blessings and departed for the heaven.

After a long walk, Rama and Lakshmana reached the Rishyamukha Mountain to meet Sugriva. Sugriva had a brother Vali, the king of Kishkindha. They were once good friends. This changed when they went to fight with a giant. The giant ran into a cave and Vali followed him, asking Sugriva to wait outside. Sugriva waited for a long time and then returned to the palace in grief, thinking that Vali was killed. He then became the king upon the request of the minister. After sometime, Vali suddenly appeared. He was mad with Sugriva and blamed him to be a cheater. Vali was strong. He drove Sugriva out of his kingdom and took away his wife. Ever since, Sugriva had been living in the Rishyamukha Mountain, which was out of bound for Vali because of a Rishi's curse.

On seeing Rama and Lakshmana from a distance, and not knowing the purpose of their visit, Sugriva sent his close friend Hanuman to find out their identity. Hanuman, disguised as an ascetic, came to Rama and Lakshmana. The brothers told Hanuman of their intention to meet Sugriva because they wanted his help to find Sita. Hanuman was impressed by their courteous behavior and removed his garb. Then he carried the princes on his shoulder to Sugriva. There Hanuman introduced the brothers and narrated their story. He then told Sugriva of their intention to come to him.

In return, Sugriva told his story and sought help from Rama to kill Vali, otherwise, he could not help even if he wanted to. Rama agreed. Hanuman then kindled a fire to bear witness to the alliance made. In due course, Vali was killed and Sugriva became the king of Kishkindha. Soon after Sugriva took over the kingdom of Vali, he ordered his army to proceed in the search of Sita.

Rama specially called Hanuman and gave his ring saying, "If any one finds Sita, it will be you Hanuman. Keep this ring to prove your identity as my messenger. Give it to Sita when you meet her." Hanuman most respectfully tied up the ring to his waist and joined the search party.

As Sita flew, she dropped her ornaments on the ground. These were traced by the monkey army and it was concluded that Sita was carried southwards. When the monkey (Vanara) army reached the Mahendra Hill, located on the south shore of India, they met Sampati, the brother of Jatayu. Sampati confirmed that Ravana took Sita to Lanka. The monkeys were perplexed, how to cross the huge sea that stretched in front of them.

Angada, the son of Sugriva, asked, "Who can cross the ocean?" silence prevailed, until Hanuman came up to give a try. Hanuman was the son of Pavana, the wind god. He had a secret gift from his father. He could fly. Hanuman enlarged himself to a huge size and took a jump to cross the ocean. After overcoming many obstacles, at last Hanuman reached Lanka. He soon contracted his body and alighted as a tiny insignificant creature. He soon passed through the city unnoticed and managed to enter the palace quietly. He went through every chamber but could not see Sita.

Finally, Hanuman located Sita in one of the gardens of Ravana, called Ashoka grove (Vana). She was surrounded by the Rakshashis who were guarding her. Hanuman hid on a tree and watched Sita from a distance. She was in deep distress, crying and praying to God for her relief. Hanuman's heart melted in pity. He took Sita as his mother.

Just then Ravana entered the garden and approached Sita. "I have waited enough. Be sensible and become my queen. Rama can not cross the ocean and come through this impregnable city. You better forget about him." Sita sternly replied, "I have repeatedly told you to return me to Lord Rama before his wrath falls upon you." Ravana got furious, "You have gone beyond the limits of my patience. You give me no choice than to kill you unless you change your mind. Within a few days I shall be back."

As soon as Ravana left, other Rakshashis, who were attending Sita, came back and suggested her to marry Ravana and enjoy the enviable wealth of Lanka." Sita kept quiet. Slowly the Rakshashis wandered away, Hanuman came down from his hiding place and gave Rama's ring to Sita. Sita was thrilled. She wanted to hear about Rama and Lakshmana. After conversing for a while Hanuman asked Sita to take a ride on her back to return to Rama. Sita did not agree.

"I do not want to return home secretly" said Sita, "I want Rama to defeat Ravana and take me back with honor."

Hanuman agreed. Then Sita gave her necklace to Hanuman as an evidence confirming their meeting.

Before departing from the Ashoka grove (Vana), Hanuman wanted Ravana to have a lesson for his misconduct. So he began to destroy the Ashoka grove by uprooting the trees. Soon the Rakshasa warriors came running to catch the monkey but were beaten up. The message reached Ravana. He was enraged. He asked Indrajeet, his able son, to capture Hanuman. A fierce battle ensued and Hanuman was finally captured when Indrajeet used the most powerful weapon, the Brahmastra missile. Hanuman was taken to Ravana's court and the captive stood in front of the king.

Lingashtakam

Brahma Murari surarchita Lingam
Nirmala bhasita sobhita Lingam
Janmaja dukha vinasaka Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (1)

Devamuni pravararchita Lingam
Kamadahana karunakara Lingam
Ravana darpa vinasaka Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (2)

Sarva sugandhi sulepita Lingam
Buddhi vivardhana karana Lingam
Siddha surasura vandita Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (3)

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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Coloring Exercise

