

DASHAVATAR - Rama Avatar - Part 3



Hanuman introduced himself as the messenger of Rama. "You have abducted the wife of my all powerful master, Lord Rama. If you want peace, return her with honor to my master or else, you and your kingdom will be destroyed." Ravana was wild with rage. He ordered to kill Hanuman instantly when his younger brother Vibhishana objected. "You cannot kill a king's envoy" said Vibhishana. Then Ravana ordered Hanuman's tail to be set on fire.

The Rakshasa army took Hanuman outside the hall, while Hanuman increased his size and lengthened his tail. It was wrapped with rags and ropes and soaked in oil. He was then paraded through the streets of Lanka and a big mob followed to have fun. The tail was set on fire but because of his divine blessing Hanuman did not feel the heat. He soon shrank his size and shook off the ropes that bound him and escaped. Then, with the torch of his burning tail, he jumped from roof to roof to set the city of Lanka on fire. People began to run, creating chaos and hideous cries. Finally, Hanuman went to the sea shore and put off the fire in the sea water. Then he began his homeward flight.

When Hanuman joined the monkey army and narrated his experience, they all laughed. Soon the army returned to Kishkindha. Then Hanuman quickly went to Rama to give his first-hand account. He took out the jewel that Sita gave and placed it in Rama's hands. Rama burst into tears when he saw the jewel. Rama addressed Hanuman and said, "Hanuman! You have achieved what none else could. What can I do for you?" Hanuman prostrated before Rama and sought his divine blessing.

Sugriva then discussed in detail with Rama their next course of action. On an auspicious hour the entire monkey army set out from Kishkindha towards Mahendra Hill, located on the opposite side of Lanka. Upon reaching Mahendra Hill, Rama faced the same problem, how to cross the ocean with the army. He called for a meeting of all the monkey chiefs, and sought their suggestions for a solution.

When Ravana heard from his messengers that Rama had already arrived at Mahendra Hill, and was preparing to cross the ocean to Lanka, he summoned his ministers for advice. They unanimously decided to fight Rama to his death. To them, Ravana was indestructible and they, undefeatable. Only Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana, was cautious and opposed to this. Vibhishana said, "Brother Ravana, you must return the chaste woman, Sita, to her husband, Rama, seek his forgiveness and restore peace." Ravana became upset with Vibhishana and told him to leave the kingdom of Lanka.

Vibhishana, through his magical power, reached Mahendra Hill and sought permission to meet Rama. The monkeys were suspicious but took him to Rama as a captive. Vibhishana explained to Rama all that happened in Ravana's court and sought his asylum. Rama gave him sanctuary and Vibhishana became the closest adviser to Rama in the war against Ravana. Rama promised Vibhishana to make him the future king of Lanka.

To reach Lanka, Rama decided to build a bridge with the help of the monkey engineer Nala. He also summoned Varuna, the God of the Ocean, to cooperate by staying calm while the bridge was in the making. Immediately thousands of monkeys set about the task of gathering the materials to build the bridge. When the materials were piled up in heaps, Nala, the great architect, started to build the bridge. It was a stupendous undertaking. But the entire monkey army worked hard and completed the bridge in just five days. The army crossed over to Lanka.

After crossing the ocean, Rama sent Angada, the son of Sugriva, to Ravana as a messenger. Angada went to Ravana's court and delivered Rama's message, "Return Sita with honor or face destruction." Ravana became enraged and ordered him out of the court immediately.

Angada returned with Ravana's message and preparation for the war began. The next morning Rama ordered the monkey army to attack. The monkeys rushed forward and hurled huge boulders against the city walls and gates. The battle continued for a long time. Thousands were dead on each side and the ground soaked in blood.

When Ravana's army was losing, Indrajeet, Ravana's son, took the command. He had the ability to fight while staying invisible. His arrows tied up Rama and Lakshmana with serpents. The monkeys began to run with the fall of their leaders. Suddenly, Garuda, the king of the birds, and the sworn enemy of the serpents, came to their rescue. All of the snakes slithered away leaving the two brave brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, free.

Hearing this, Ravana himself came forward. He hurled the powerful missile, Shakti, at Lakshmana. It descended like a fierce thunderbolt and hit hard at Lakshmana's chest. Lakshmana fell down senseless. Rama wasted no time to come forward and challenged Ravana himself. Following a fierce fight Ravana's chariot was smashed and Ravana was sorely wounded. Ravana stood helpless before Rama whereupon Rama took pity on him and said, "Go and rest now. Return tomorrow to resume our fight." In the meantime Lakshmana recovered.

Ravana was shamed and called upon his brother, Kumbhakarna for assistance. Kumbhakarna had the habit of sleeping for six months at a time. Ravana ordered him to be awakened. Kumbhakarna was in a deep sleep and it took the beating of drums, piercing of sharp instruments and elephants walking on him to awaken him. He was informed of Rama's invasion and Ravana's orders. After eating a mountain of food, Kumbhakarna appeared in the battlefield. He was huge and strong. When he approached the monkey army, like a walking tower, the monkeys took to their heels in terror. Hanuman called them back and challenged Kumbhakarna. A great fight ensued until Hanuman was wounded. Kumbhakarna headed towards Rama, ignoring the attack of Lakshmana and others. Even Rama found Kumbhakarna difficult to kill. Rama finally discharged the powerful weapon that he obtained from the wind God, Pavana. Kumbhakarna fell dead.

Hearing the news of his brother's death, Ravana swooned away. After he recovered, he lamented for a long time and then called Indrajeet. Indrajeet consoled him and promised to defeat the enemy quickly. Indrajeet began to engage in the battle safely hidden behind the clouds and invisible to Rama. Rama and Lakshmana seemed to be helpless to kill him, as he could not be located. Arrows came from all directions and finally one of the powerful arrows hit Lakshmana. Everyone thought this time Lakshmana was dead and Sushena, the physician of the Vanara army, was called. He declared that Lakshmana was only in a deep coma and instructed Hanuman to leave immediately for Gandhamadhana Hill, located near the Himalayas. Gandhamadhana Hill grew the special medicine, called Sanjivani, and was needed to revive Lakshmana. Hanuman lifted himself in the air and traveled the entire distance from Lanka to Himalaya and reached the Gandhamadhana Hill. As he was unable to locate the herb, he lifted the entire mountain and carried it to Lanka. Sushena immediately applied the herb and Lakshmana regained consciousness. Rama was relieved and the battle resumed.

This time Indrajeet played a trick on Rama and his army. He rushed forward in his chariot and created an image of Sita through his magic. Catching the image of Sita by the hair, Indrajeet beheaded Sita in front of the entire army of the Vanaras. Rama collapsed. Vibhishana came to his rescue. When Rama came to senses Vibhishana explained that it was only a trick played by Indrajeet and that Ravana would never allow Sita to be killed.

Vibhishana further explained to Rama that Indrajeet was realizing his limitations to kill Rama. Hence he would soon perform a special sacrificial ceremony in order to acquire that power. If successful, he would become invincible. Vibhishana suggested Lakshmana should go immediately to obstruct that ceremony and slay Indrajeet before he became invisible again.

Rama accordingly sent Lakshmana, accompanied by Vibhishana and Hanuman. They soon reached the spot where Indrajeet was engaged in performing the sacrifice. But before the Rakshasa prince could complete it, Lakshmana attacked him. The battle was fierce and finally Lakshmana severed Indrajeet's head from his body. Indrajeet fell dead.

With the fall of Indrajeet, Ravana's spirit was in complete despair. He wailed most piteously but sorrow soon gave way to anger. He furiously rushed to the battlefield to conclude the long drawn fight against Rama and his army. Forcing his way, past Lakshmana, Ravana came face to face with Rama. The fight was intense. Finally Rama used his Brahmastra, repeated the mantras as taught by Vashishtha, and hurled it with all his might towards Ravana. The Brahmastra whizzed through the air emitting scorching flames and then pierced the heart of Ravana. Ravana fell dead from his chariot. The Rakshasas stood silent in amazement. They could scarcely believe their eyes. The end was so sudden and final.

After Ravana's death, Vibhishana was duly crowned as king of Lanka. The message of Rama's victory was sent to Sita. Happily she bathed and came to Rama in a palanquin. Hanuman and all other monkeys came to pay their respect. Meeting Rama, Sita was overcome by her joyous emotion. Rama, however, seemed to be far away in thought.

At length Rama spoke, "I am happy to rescue you from the hands of Ravana but you have lived a year in enemy's abode. It is not proper that I should take you back now." Sita could not believe what Rama said. Bursting in tears Sita asked, "Was that my fault? The monster carried me away against my wishes. While in his residence, my mind and my heart were fixed on my Lord, Rama, alone." Sita felt deeply grieved and decided to end her life in the fire.

She turned to Lakshmana and with tearful eyes she implored him to prepare the fire. Lakshmana looked at his elder brother, hoping for some type of reprieve, but there was no sign of emotion on Rama's face and no words came from his mouth. As instructed, Lakshmana built a large fire. Sita reverently walked around her husband and approached the blazing fire. Joining her palms in salutation, she addressed Agni, the God of fire, "If I am pure, O fire, protect me." With these words Sita stepped into the flames, to the horror of the spectators. Then Agni, whom Sita invoked, arose from the flames and gently lifted Sita unharmed, and presented her to Rama.

"Rama!" addressed Agni, "Sita is spotless and pure at heart. Take her to Ayodhya. People are waiting there for you." Rama delightfully received her. "Don't I know she is pure? I had to test her for the sake of the world so that the truth may be known to all."

Rama and Sita were now reunited and ascended on an air chariot (Pushpaka Vimana), along with Lakshmana to return to Ayodhya. Hanuman went ahead to apprise Bharata of their arrival.

When the party reached Ayodhya, the entire city was waiting to receive them. Rama was coronated and he took up the reins of government much to the great joy of his subjects.

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)

Kanaka maha mani bhushita Lingam
Paniphati veshtitha shobhita Lingam
Dakshasu yajna vinashana Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (4)

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

H T T U R

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R E B H

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W E E L J

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Y N O E V

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C F E I E R

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N M L T E A

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S I R N E

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L Y A M S U

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I C V T A E P

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Coloring Exercise

