

DASHAVATAR – RAMA AVATAR (Ramayan – Part 11)



As you remember, Hanuman burnt Lanka, and then he flew back across the ocean to his waiting comrades Jambavan, Angada, and others. As he was flying towards them, they heard him roaring and making joyous shouts. By this they knew that he had found Sita and their mission was a success. Hanuman told them all the news - how he had found Sita in the Ashoka grove, how he had set fire to Lanka and so on. As they heard the details, the excited vanaras, danced about and jumped up and down in the air. The crown prince Angada boastfully declared that even without an army they could rescue Sita and return her to Rama. But Hanuman said that Sita was expecting her Lord to come and rescue her, so they should head for the vanara capitol Kishkinda straightaway. Hanuman was eager to get back to Rama to provide him the good news that Sita was found.

Their enthusiasm lent wings to their feet and the monkeys made the return back to Kishkinda in short time. Rama, Lakshmana, and Sugriva were waiting anxiously for Hanuman's arrival and report. The monkey host arrived with a great clamour. Rama could tell by their expressions that they had been successful. Each one of them strutted in, as if he had personally achieved the impossible. Hanuman and Angada now came forward and Hanuman bent low before Rama and said that he has seen Sita. Rama's happiness was very great! He hugged Hanuman and gave him all his blessings.

The monkeys competed with each other in their attempt to tell him the narrative, which they had heard from Hanuman. Rama looked lovingly at them and then said, "I would like to know more about Sita. What did she say? Did she send any message for me"? At this, the monkeys turned sheepishly to Hanuman and begged him to continue the story. Hanuman bowed low to Rama and told him the whole story of his conquest of Lanka and his meeting with the lovely, lonely, princess of Videha who was eating her heart out for her beloved husband. He did not leave out even a single word spoken by the bereft queen. Rama listened with tears coursing down his cheeks. Hanuman told him how happy Sita was to receive Rama's ring and then he presented the hair ornament which she had given for Rama. Rama took it in his hands and pressed it to his chest. A flood of memories swept over him and he said, "This was given to Janaki by her father, Janaka and she wore it for our wedding. How beautiful she looked"! So saying he fell into a deep reverie thinking of his lovely, young bride.

Hanuman and Lakshmana tried their best to console him. At last He managed to attain a measure of composure and praised Hanuman for his fantastic effort. "You have accomplished that which no one else could have done". With these words, Rama enfolded Hanuman in his firm clasp and pressed him to his bosom while everyone looked on with delight. Preparations started for the war with Ravana. The entire army of monkeys and bears marched towards the sea shore, across the sea from Lanka. Rama started thinking how to cross the expansive ocean to reach Lanka. Sugriva suggested the greatest warriors – Hanuman, Angada, Jambavan, Nila, and Sugriva themselves can jump over to Lanka and defeat Ravana without having to worry about transporting the entire army of monkeys across the ocean. Rama replied, "It is My vow that I will personally go and destroy Lanka."

Meanwhile, in Lanka, Ravana had called a council of ministers to discuss the events of that catastrophic day, when Lanka had been burnt. His spies had informed him about the approach of the monkey contingent. He felt sure that Rama would succeed in crossing the sea. He thought it prudent to ask the opinion of the wise men of his assembly. Being ignorant of Rama's strength, and eager to please their master, the Rakshasas replied, "Your Majesty, you have defeated the gods. There is no one in the whole of the three worlds who doesn't tremble at the very mention of your name. Why should you fear a puny man like Rama? His army is only composed of monkeys and bears. How can it be compared to your army? Your son, Indrajit, has conquered the heavens. He can easily defeat this monkey army of Ram's, singlehanded, without the help of the army". These words of comfort by all

his ablest men made Ravana very confident and happy. The only one who spoke against his wishes was his own brother, Vibhishana.

"We should never under-estimate an enemy. How has Rama offended you? You are the one who stole his wife and are keeping her here against her will. Lusting after another man's wife will lead to unhappiness and infamy. Sita will be the cause of untold misery for you and for your subjects. Take my advice and return Sita to Rama. He is a dangerous opponent. If you do not act immediately, great danger will befall us. I have dared to advise you, because you are my brother and I have great love for you. We would all like to live in peace and harmony, so please take my advice," said Vibhishana.

Ravana was overwhelmed by the passionate desire for Sita. All he wanted to hear was how great he was – he did not want the truth. He became very angry upon hearing Vibhishana's advice, and threatened to kill his brother if he continues to talk like this. "Ravana, I only advised you in the hopes of saving you from being killed by Rama. Still, you have rejected my advice. Of course, you are free to do as you like, but I will no longer remain here with you." By saying so, Vibhishana left Lanka with a few trusted advisors, and within an hour he reached the place where Rama was staying on the other side of the sea. He asked for shelter at Rama's lotus feet.

Some heated arguments occurred whether Vibhishana should be given shelter or not. Many thought that demons were not to be trusted, and Vibhishana and his friends should be imprisoned. Finally, Rama turned to Hanuman for his opinion. Hanuman said, "My Lord, allow me to say one thing. I have carefully watched Vibhishana's face and listened to his voice when he was speaking. He has no deceit or evil intention. I think we should accept him. But with your matchless intelligent, only you can finally decide what you should do with Vibhishana." Rama said "Anyone who seeks shelter at my feet, I will accept him, no matter who he is."

Vibhishana fell at Rama's feet and said, "I swear in the name of dharma, that I will assist you in all ways, to the best of my ability, in carrying out your resolve. But the one thing I will not do is to kill my own people". Rama said, "Lakshmana! Bring water from the ocean. I will myself perform the coronation of Vibhishana, here and now". Thus saying, Rama took the water brought by Lakshmana and performed the abhisheka, or ceremonial bath, by pouring the consecrated water over the head of the future King of Lanka, amidst great joy and applause from the bears and monkeys.

Now both Sugriva and Hanuman asked their new-found ally to suggest a method how they could cross the ocean. Vibhishana suggested that the Lord of the ocean would surely comply with the wishes of Rama if he requested him. "This sea owes its very existence and name to the Sagara brothers, who were the ancestors of Rama. He will surely remember this and help him in his task". Rama considered it to be a very good proposal, and immediately went to the beach and sat down on a mat of darbha (a type of grass) in front of the ocean and meditated.

Three days and three nights passed without any response from the Lord of the ocean. At the end of this time, Rama lost his patience and said to Lakshmana, "Lakshmana! People mistake my good nature for weakness. Some people can only be taught by force and the Lord of the ocean seems to be one of them. Bring my bow and arrows so that I can teach this Ocean a lesson! Just look as I dry up all the water so that the monkeys can march to Lanka on foot without difficulty." So saying, he started to discharge arrow after arrow deep into the water, causing the ocean to become agitated with high, tossing waves, terrifying the living creatures within. The ocean throbbed and moaned in pain. Then, when Rama invoked the supremely powerful Brahmastra, Lakshmana caught hold of

Ram's hand and begged him to desist. Out of the ocean, Samudra, the Lord of the ocean, rose up, trembling with fear. He rose up on the crest of a wave, with folded palms kept above his head and slowly came to the shore and approached Rama and stood humbly in front of him.

"Oh Lord", he said, "you are known to be the abode of kindness and mercy. I did not appear before you earlier, because I cannot go against my nature, as you know only too well. Earth, water, fire and wind are all ruled by the laws of nature. I am by nature deep, wide and unfathomable. I cannot change my nature. But I can give you plan by which you can cross easily. There is a monkey called Nala in your army who is the son of Vishwakarma, the architect of the gods; He is an expert in building bridges. Let him build a bridge and I will see that it does not sink or fall apart while the army is crossing". After saying this, the presiding deity of the ocean disappeared from view.

Rama called Nala who immediately agreed to construct the bridge. Before starting the construction, Rama made a beautiful linga of Lord Shiva, with the sand and worshipped it and asked Shiva to bless him with success in his endeavor. The place where Rama installed the Shiva Lingam is known as Rameswaram and it is a famous place of worship even to this day.

Thereafter, under Rama's supervision, all the monkeys and bears entered the forests. After tearing off great rocks, uprooting trees, and unearthing whole hills, they brought them to the shore. Hanuman also joined and repeated the magic mantra of "Sri Rama" over every stone and boulder and the work went on with great speed and enthusiasm. In this way the bridge was constructed, and it was one hundred yojanas long and ten yojanas wide. It is said that through the powerful SRI RAMA mantra written on them, the rocks were even able to float on the water.

It is said there was a squirrel who wanted to help Rama used to wet his fur, roll in the sand and then go and shake off the dust on the bridge, since that was the only effort he was capable of making. The monkeys made fun of him and told him to go off or he would be trampled by their feet. He was frightened and sad and went and nestled close to Rama, who took him on his lap and comforted him by passing his three fingers down his back. It is said that to this day, the squirrel bears the mark of Rama's fingers on his back. Rama rebuked those who were making fun of the squirrel. He told them that the efforts of the squirrel, however small, were just as precious to him as those of the huge monkeys and bears. Thus the little squirrel also found a place in Rama's heart.

The whole work was completed in five days. The demigods and celestial rishis assembled in the sky just to behold the wonderful bridge, which looked like the Milky Way, spanning the deep blue sea. Sugriva requested Rama and Lakshmana to mount upon the backs of Hanuman and Angada. Within a short time, the entire army consisting of millions of monkeys began their march. When they reached Suvela Mountain on the northern shore of the island of Lanka, the monkeys and bears became jubilant. They were greatly excited! They roared with joy! Rama was touched by the enthusiasm and devotion of the monkeys and bears and their innocent love.

Questions:

- How did Angada and the monkeys know that Hanuman was successful without even talking to him?
- How did Rama feel when he looked at the jewelry Hanuman felt from Sita?
- Was Rama happy with Hanuman?
- With the exception of Vibhishana, what did Ravana's counselors tell him about Rama?

- Why did Vibhishana give different advice?
- Is it better to tell the truth or just say what people want to hear?
- What did Rama say when he accepted Vibhishana into his fold?
- Why did Rama get angry at the ocean? What was he going to do to it?
- What mantra did Hanuman write on all the rocks?
- Did Rama like the work of the powerful monkeys better than that of the squirrel? Why or why not?

Achyutashtakam

**Achyutam Keshavam Rama Narayanam
Krishna Damodaram Vasudevam Hari
Shri Dharam Madhavam Gopika Vallabham
Janaki Nayakam Ramachandram Bhaje (1)**

**Achyutam Keshavam Satyabha Madhavam
Madhavam Shri Dharam Radhika Radhitam
Indira Mandiram Chetasa Sundaram
Devakinandanam Nandajam Sandadhe (2)**

**Vishnave Jishnave Sankhine Chakrine
Rukmini raagine Janaki janaye
Vallavi vallabha yarchita yatmane
Kamsavi dhvansine Vansine Te Namah (3)**

***Krishna Govinda He Rama Narayana
Shripate Vasudev aachyuta Shrinidhe
Achyutananda He Madhavaa dhokshajam
Dvarakanayaka Draupadi rakshaka (4)***

**Rakshasa sobhitah Siitaya Sobhito
Dandakaa ranyabhu Punyata Kaaranah
Lakshmane naanvito Vaanarai Sevito
Agastya Sam pujito radhava Paatu Maam (5)**

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**Dhenuka ristaka nista kri ddveshiha
Keshiha Kansahru dvansikavadakah
Putanakopakah Surajakhelano
Balagopalaka Paatu Maam Sarvada (6)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFpVxy6jNPM>

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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