

DASHAVATAR – RAMA AVATAR (Ramayan – Part 13)



After reaching the northern shores of Lanka, the Vanara army rested for the night on mount Suleva. Next day morning, seeing Lanka and describing it, Rama instructs Lakshmana to draw up his army in battle-array. By the mean time, Ravana instructs his ministers, Shuka and Sarana to enter the enemy's army in disguise and to bring all the required information about them. When Shuka and Sarana entered the enemy's ranks, Vibhishana recognizes and captures them. But Rama sets them free.

Going back to Ravana, they explain the mighty strength of the enemy's ranks and request him to surrender Sita to Rama. Ravana climbs up the roof of his palace and sees the entire army of monkeys from there. Ravana enquires about the various monkey leaders and Sarana shows him the army-generals along with their distinguishing characteristics, and individual strengths. After listening to Sarana's words, Shuka in his turn enumerates the enemies and completes the account by saying, "O, king! Carefully observing this army, which appears much the same as a blazing planet, prepare yourself for a great effort to get victory and take measures to avoid defeat from the enemies." After hearing those unpleasant words, Ravana got angry at Shuka and Sarana, asking them to leave the assembly. They tried to give him good advice, but he would not listen.

He again sends some spies to the place of Rama and Lakshmana. Those spies got caught by Vibhishana and the monkeys started harassing them. But the compassionate Rama got them released and the spies came back to Lanka. Thereafter, the spies informed Ravana about Rama, with his imperturbable army, having encamped on Suvela Mountain. Hearing from the spies about the arrival of Rama, and the strength of his army from various sources, the exceedingly strong Ravana became a little perturbed.

After returning to his private quarters, Ravana called for one of his Rakshasas, who was a master of conjuring tricks, and ordered him to create an illusory head of Rama, as well as as a perfect imitation of His powerful bow, and an arrow. Ravana went to the Ashoka grove, and informed Sita that her husband along with his army had been killed in battle. He produced before her the illusory Rama head along with bow and arrows created by his Rakshasa's conjuring trick. Sita got deceived by Ravana's trick. Sita was shocked, fell unconscious at the sight of Rama's head and bow. She regained consciousness and asked Ravana to kill her also, so that she could join her husband in heaven.

Meanwhile, Ravana is abruptly called away by an emissary and after consultation with his ministers, prepares his army for action against the forces of Rama. By the mean time, Vibhishana's wife, Sarama, reaches Ashoka grove, and assures Sita by telling her that Ravana, the conjurer created an illusory appearance of Rama's head and exhibited it before her. She informs Sita that Rama is still alive and is stationed along with his forces at the southern shore of the ocean. Sarama restores confidence to Sita, by saying that Rama with his sharp arrows will kill Ravana and take her back to Ayodhya.

With the sound of kettle drums and conches, Rama arrives to Lanka with his army. Ravana hears those sounds and calls his ministers to talk out his further course of action. Malyavan, Ravana's maternal grandfather, advises Ravana to make peace with Rama and restore Sita to him as he perceives adverse omens. Ravana turns a deaf ear to the words of Malyavan and even abuses him. Ravana says he is exaggerating the strength of Rama. Ravana further says that he will not restore Sita to Rama, and he will make sure that Rama and his army will not go back alive, having crossed the

ocean and reached Lanka. Then, Ravana assigns Prahasta and others to guard the four main gates of Lanka against the inroads of the enemy.

Rama, Sugriva, Hanuman and others assemble to take counsel together, upon reaching the precincts of Lanka. While they were deliberating on the ways and means for the success of their mission, Vibhishana comes up with the gathered information of the enemy's plans and positions through his spies. After hearing Vibhishana's information, Rama orders Nila, Angada, Hanuman and others to storm the four gates of Lanka fort. Rama expresses his desire to Vibhishana and Sugreeva to halt on Suvela Mountain for that night, and to encircle the City of Lanka.

Rama and the monkeys see the charming gardens and groves located in Lanka, viewing them from the top of Suvela Mountain. They see the city with its large mansions and seven storied buildings, including the thousand-pillared mansion of Ravana with a height almost touching the skies. As Rama gazed at the city with great admiration, He happened to spot Ravana, perched atop the northern gate. When Sugriva also spotted Ravana, he impetuously jumped from the peak of Mount Suvela right to where the Rakshasa King was sitting. A fierce wrestling match took place, as the two heroes scratched one another with their nails, so that both became covered with blood and perspiration. They wrestled endlessly in different postures. Finally, Ravana realized that he would not be able to defeat Sugriva by mere physical strength, so he began to utilize his mystic powers. Understanding this, Sugriva decided to abandon the fight. After bounding into the air, he returned to where Rama was staying. Sugriva felt very blissful at having performed such a heroic feat and his followers enthusiastically jumped up and down. Rama went and embraced Sugriva, but at the same time, He chastised him out of love. Rama advises Sugriva not to repeat such reckless acts in future.

Rama decided not to waste any time. He climbed down Suvela Mountain, reviewed his troops one more time, and commanded the monkey-generals to besiege all the four gates of Lanka. He himself along with Lakshmana protects the army, besieging the northern gate being guarded by Ravana. Rama then ordered Angada to go and deliver a message as His envoy to Ravana. Leaping high into the air, Angada quickly came before Ravana, and tried his best to convince Ravana to surrender Sita, but in vain. Ravana commands his attendants to seize Angada. Angada shakes off those attendants who tried to seize him ascend the roof of Ravana's palace, tramples and crushes it down by his strength. Angada finally returns to Rama, who was stationed in the midst of the monkey-forces. Having witnessed Angada's prowess, Ravana began to foresee his own destruction and thus he sighed heavily, again and again.

Meanwhile, Rama issues a command to the monkeys to destroy the enemies forthwith. The monkeys start demolishing various important defensive structures of the city of Lanka and besiege all the city-gates. Ravana commands his army to commence combat. A sound of conches blown by the army and terrible roars on both sides echoes the air, earth and sea. Demons begin to strike the monkeys with their clubs and other weapons, while the monkeys respond the strike with trees, and stones, as well as their claws and teeth.

Extra-ordinary duels arose between the monkeys and demons, who ran up towards each other. Stationed on top of the defense wall, the Rakshasa pierced many monkeys with their weapons. At the same time, numerous monkeys jumped up and forcibly dragged the Rakshasas down to the ground. Streams of blood flowed from both sides. In a series of hand-to-hand encounters, the

valiant monkeys destroyed the strong demons. The remaining demons waited for the sun set and re-assembled with a renewed vigor for the battle.

Rama and Lakshmana in that darkness kill the foremost of demons. That fatal night transforms into a night of dissolution. When some demons attack Rama with arrows, Rama strikes down six of the demons within a moment and they run away for life. Rama then clears off innumerable demons from the battle field. Angada strikes Indrajit, one of Ravana's powerful sons, but Indrajit vanishes from the spot. Sugriva and his monkeys feel delighted and praise Angada's prowess. Indrajit comes back in an invisible form and by recourse to magic, makes Rama and Lakshmana captive by hurling a network of serpents around them.

Rama orders ten of the monkey-generals to search for the whereabouts of Indrajit. Indrajit then announced, "Rama and Lakshmana, listen to me. Even Indra cannot see me, and so what to speak of others. Now, it will be my great pleasure to dispatch you both to the abode of Yamaraja with my unceasing torrents of sharp arrows." As Indrajit continued to pierce Rama and Lakshmana, there finally remained no space to place a finger in between the arrows that completely covered their bodies. At last, when Rama's bow dropped from his hand as he fell to the ground, Lakshmana gave up all hope of survival and fainted. Seeing this pitiful sight, all the monkeys became exceedingly despondent and tears came to their eyes.

As the leaders of the monkeys came and surrounded Rama and Lakshmana, Indrajit ecstatically announced to his followers, "The two mighty warriors have fallen victim to my magical snake-arrows that are imbued with power of Brahma. Not even Indra and all the demigods could save Rama and Lakshmana now!" Convinced that Rama and Lakshmana were dead, Indrajit joyfully departed for Ravana's palace, intoxicated by his victory.

Sugriva and Vibhishana came to where Rama and Lakshmana were lying motionless, soaked with blood and breathing only slightly. Sugriva was especially pained to see how the two brothers were completely enmeshed in the serpentine arrows, and so Vibhishana took special care to comfort him. While wiping the tears from Sugriva's eyes, Vibhishana said, "O King, I know that Rama and Lakshmana can be revived. Please rest assured that they will not die. Guard Rama carefully while I rally our army and restore the monkeys to confidence."

Meanwhile, as all the foremost monkeys guarded Rama and Lakshmana, Indrajit went to Ravana and reported the news of his victory with great pride. Ravana applauds his son for his daring act. Thinking that Rama and Lakshmana were dead, Ravana gave up all fear and anxiety.

Ravana then asks Sita's female sentries to ride with Sita in his Pushpak Vimana chariot, and show her Rama and Lakshmana lying there motionless. At first Sita is shocked, but Trijata, her kind companion, tells her that they are just stunned and charmed by a weapon. She shows how orderly the monkey army fights, which would not be the case if Rama and Lakshmana had been fatally wounded. Her words fall like nectar in Sita's ears. The Vimana returns to Lanka.

Suddenly, Garuda, the sworn enemy of the serpents (and Lord Vishnu's vehicle), comes to their rescue. Upon his arrival, all the snake-arrows that were binding Rama and Lakshmana instantly fled. Then Garuda came and wiped Rama and Lakshmana's faces with his hands, and just by his touch, their bodies regained their normal bright, and renewed strength. When they saw that Rama and Lakshmana had completely recovered from their wounds, all the monkeys jumped out of joy.

Questions:

- What trick did Ravana play on Sita? Was this nice? How did she find out the truth?
- Why did Ravana send spies to look at Rama's army? Who caught them? What did they do to them?
- Did anyone try to advise Ravana to return Sita? If so, who? If so, why?
- Who was Angada?
- What type of arrows did Indrajit shoot? Why couldn't anyone see him?
- Is Trijata Rakshasa woman? Is she good or bad?
- Who saved Rama and Lakshmana?
- Who was Indrajit?

Om Jai Jagdish Hare Stotram: This is one of the very popular prayers sung by all Hindus in each and every temple. It is written in a colloquial dialect of Hindi and touches the heart instantly. Here is the ninth and last verse. Learn it carefully.

Poorna Brahma ki Aarati
Jo koyi gave
Swami jo koyi gave
Kahat Shivananda Swamy
Kahat Shivananda Swamy
Sukha sampati aave
Om jaya jagdisa hare

Meaning:

Whoever sings this Aarati to the Almighty,
they will be blessed with all worldly happiness –
Shivananda Swamy said this

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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