

DASHAVATAR – RAMA AVATAR (Ramayan – Part 9)



As we learned in the last lesson Ravana kidnapped Sita. He fought with the eagle Jatayu and wounded him very badly. He started flying to his island kingdom Lanka in his chariot airplane. Sita was overwhelmed with fear and grief. As she flew over the countryside, she suddenly noticed five monkey chiefs sitting on top of a mountain. Unnoticed by Ravana, she took off her silk upper garment and some jewelry and dropped them in the midst of the monkeys. She hoped this would help Rama find her one day.

After reaching Lanka, the Rakshasa King took Sita into the inner apartments of his palace, and tried to impress her with his fortune. "I am a great King!" he told her. "I have conquered Indra and all the gods! The nine planets are under my control." He took her around the palace, showing her his golden throne room. "I have hundreds of wives, but you will be Queen of them all. Anything you desire will be yours!" he told her. "Why stay with this Rama?" he asked her. "He is just an ascetic wandering around in the forest! Accept me, and anything you want will be yours. I will be your servant always". Rama had a huge ego due to all his wealth and power. He thought he could tempt Sita.

Sita was not listening to anything the ten headed demon Ravana was saying. "Listen Ravana, if you are so great, why did you have to kidnap me? Why didn't you face my husband Rama? I tell you the truth, Rama is like fire for you! His arrows will burn you up as soon as he finds you! I am a married woman and will never look at another man than Rama!"

Sita's words burned Ravana badly. No one had ever abused him so badly. He became very, very angry. But he was so infatuated with her that he did not know what to do. "Alright, woman" he said in an angry tone. "Maybe time will change your mind. Either you will consent to become my wife in the next twelve months, or I will have my cooks cut you and serve you to me for a meal!" he told her. Since rakshasas (demons) ate people, Sita knew his words were true. She prayed Rama would find her before she was eaten by Ravana.

Ravana ordered his attendants to take Sita to the Ashoka grove, which was a beautiful garden filled with trees bearing fruit and flowers. Sita was already thoroughly miserable, and as the deformed Rakshasa women continued to intimidate her, she fainted due to fright.

Meanwhile, Lord Brahma summoned Indra to go and give her some heavenly kheer (sweet pudding) to eat. Indra went to the Ashoka grove along with Nidradevi, the goddess of sleep, to put all Rakshasi guards to sleep. Indra approached Sita in his celestial form, and gave kheer pot to her. As soon as she ate that Prasad, Sita became freed from all bodily pangs (hunger, sleep, etc.).

As you may remember, Sita got in this fix when she asked Rama to chase the golden deer, which was really the demon Maricha in disguise. She then ordered Lakshmana to run after Rama when Maricha made a sound like Rama in distress. Without any protector, Ravana kidnapped her. After killing Maricha, Rama hurried back to His cottage, fearing something was wrong. On the way, Rama met Lakshmana, who was on his way from the cottage to look for Rama. Rama felt distressed the moment He saw Lakshmana. "Why did you leave Sita alone?"

The golden deer was Maricha in disguise.” Lakshmana tried to explain the situation when both the brothers suspected foul play and ran towards the cottage. The cottage was empty, as they feared. They thoroughly searched the entire area of Janasthana. Thereafter, while roaming through the forest, suddenly they heard a cry. They ran towards the source and found the wounded bird Jatayu. Rama recognized Jatayu, and took him in his lap. Jatayu narrated how he had fought a huge demon stealing Sita. He gasped his last breath while uttering, “Rama, Rama.” Rama and Lakshmana performed Jatayu’s funeral ceremony. Then they continued the search for Sita.

Passing out of the Dandaka forest, Rama and Lakshmana traveled toward the south. On their way, the two princes were suddenly caught by the ferocious demon Kabandha. This Rakshasa was as big as a mountain without head. He had only one eye which was placed in his chest. His mouth was in his great belly and he had two enormous long arms, enabling him to easily catch large animals to eat. Both brothers were bewildered and did not know what to do. Then Rama advised Lakshmana, “You cut one hand, and I will cut the other hand!” And so they did. Once Kabandha’s arms were severed, he became helpless. Kabandha explained that he used to be a



celestial musician, a gandharva. He did some bad things and Indra, King of the gods, cursed him to take the monster form they saw him in now. On Kabandha’s request, they put him on a funeral fire so he would die. From the flames arose a lovely being which entered a celestial chariot and ascended to heaven.

Before leaving, the celestial form said, “Rama, you should go and make friends with Sugriva, the monkey king, who has been exiled by his brother Vali.” He also needs a

benefactor. He is now living along with four other Vanaras on Rishyamukha Mountain, which is located near Lake Pampa.” Following Kabandha’s directions, they departed, and on the second day they arrived at Lake Pampa. There they 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, and offered them nuts and fruits she collected for them. Then she took Rama’s blessings and departed for the heaven.

The meetings with this saintly woman, and drinking the waters of Lake Pampa gave strength of mind to the princes. After a long walk, Rama and Lakshmana reached Rishyamukha Hill. Remember the five monkeys Sita had seen and thrown her garment and some jewelry to? Those same five monkeys lived there. Their chief was Sugriva. They were not really monkeys, but a now extinct race of beings called Vanaras. Vanaras were semi-divine beings that looked like monkeys.

From a distance, Sugriva could see Rama and Lakshmana approaching. Suspecting that they wanted to do them harm, Sugriva became afraid. Hanuman said he would go and talk to the two warriors and find out if they intended harm or not. Hanuman could change his form at will. Disguised as an ascetic, Hanuman came to Rama and Lakshmana. The brothers told Hanuman their intention to meet Sugriva because they wanted him to help them find Sita. Hanuman was impressed by their courteous behavior and removed his garb. He carried the princes on his shoulder to Sugriva. Hanuman introduced the brothers to Sugriva and narrated their story.

Sugriva then told Rama and Lakshmana his own story. "My brother is Vali" he told them. "He is King of the Vanaras. Once a mighty demon, called Maayavi, challenged my brother Vali's supremacy. Vali accepted the challenge and a fight broke out between the two. They entered one cave and continued their fight inside. Vali told me to stay outside the cave, and wait for him for fifteen days. But even after more than fifteen days, Vali did not return. Then I heard a lot of screaming and howling, and blood started to ooze out of the cave. I thought my brother Vali had died. So I covered over the entrance to the cave with big stones so that the demon could not escape and take over our kingdom."

Sugriva continued "After that, all the ministers asked me to become King of the Vanaras. I did not ask for this, but they thrust it upon me. A little while later, my brother Vali returned. He was very angry that I had sealed the cave. When he saw me on the throne, he thought I had tried to kill him. He became very angry, and wanted to kill me. This is why I had to run away and am living in the forest. Only four trusted ministers including Hanuman stay with me."

Rama thought Vali's anger with Sugriva was justified. They became fast friends. "I will kill Vali!" said Rama. Sugriva smiled at him. "Vali is very powerful!" said Sugriva. Lakshmana narrated how one arrow from Rama had shot Maricha so many miles into the air, carrying him to the sea. Sugriva still smiled, but did not have firm faith yet the Rama could conquer Vali. Even the demon Ravana had been defeated in battle by Vali. Rama took out an arrow. He shot it, and it pierced not one, but seven trees, all at some distance from another. Sugriva was now satisfied that Rama had the strength to conquer Vali. Sugriva promised to lead a grand search for Sita once Vali was conquered and Sugriva became King of the Vanaras. Sugriva showed Rama the jewels and garment dropped by Sita. This gave Rama and Lakshmana more hope of finding Sita soon.

On Rama's advice, Sugriva went to Kishkindha and roared loudly to challenge his brother. A fierce battle followed. Vali soon gained the upper hand. Rama could see that Sugriva was on the verge of collapse, and so He killed Vali with a powerful arrow.

This incident between Vali and Sugriva is a good example of the moral teaching conveyed: there was nothing terribly wrong in the conduct of either of Vali or of Sugriva. But anger confused Vali's mind, thinking Sugriva had betrayed him. One who yields to anger loses the capacity to see the truth. That way lays destruction. Vali's anger led to his end. Sugriva humbly confessed the truth, but Vali would not listen. Sugriva, too was guilty of imprudent haste. He concluded too quickly that his brother had died. One should not desire what belongs to another.

Questions:

What is a rakshasa woman?
Did Ravana have a big ego?
How long did Ravana give Sita to live if she did not accept him?
Who was Kabandha? How did he help Rama and Lakshmana?
What types of being were Sugriva and Hanuman?
What did they look like?
Who was Shabari?
Who was Vali?
Was he strong?
Why is anger bad?
How did Lord Brahman and Indra help Sita?

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 fifth verse. Learn it carefully.

**Tum karunā ke sāgara
Tum pālana kartā
Swāmi tum pālana kartā
Mai mūrakh khalakhāmi
Mai mūrakh khalakhāmi
Kripā karo Bhartā
Om jaya Jagadīśa hare**

Meaning:

You are an ocean of mercy
You are the protector
Lord, you are the protector
I am a simpleton with wrong wishes,
I am a servant and you are the Lord
Oh Lord, Grant me your divine grace
Oh Lord of the Universe

Visit the Temple website, <http://www.saiastin.org/downloads.htm> and go the section called Sai Aaratis and Bhajans, sixth one down, to hear the pronunciation of Aum Jai Jagdish Hare...

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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Coloring Exercise

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