

DASHAVATAR – RAMA AVATAR (Ramayan – Part 16)



Hearing of his beloved son Indrajit's death, Ravana felt distressed. He decided now was the time to kill Rama and put an end to this bloodshed. The entire kingdom of Lanka was resounding with the lamentations of the *rakshasi* women.

With his head throbbing with fury, Ravana thundered into battle and created havoc in Rama's ranks. The army scattered at his sight. Only Hanuman, Sugriva, Vibhishana, Lakshmana, and Rama stood their ground.

Ravana's eyes were a fiery red as they glared at his brother Vibhishana. A swift spear soon followed his fierce glance. However, Lakshmana deflected the spear with an arrow and saved Vibhishana's life. Ravana grabbed another spear, puts a spell on it, and hurtled it towards Lakshmana. When it hit Lakshmana, it knocked him down. Rama then shot hails of arrows on Ravana from his flaming bow. Ravana then runs away out of fear. Rama returned to where Lakshmana was lying, and started crying on the state of His beloved brother. He is disconsolate. Without his brother, Rama feels as though he has lost everything.

Hanuman comes quickly to the rescue. Riding on the wings of the wind as per Sushena's request, Hanuman vaults North to the Himalayas, and brings an entire mountain and carries it to Lanka the second time. Healed by the herbs, Lakshmana is soon back on his feet.

Then Rama again turns to face Ravana. For several seconds the two stand staring at each other. The two incensed warriors engage in a pitched battle. The dreadful combat lasts seven days and seven nights. Neither hero rests for a single second. Every *astra* (weapon) one warrior sends is meticulously met by the *astra* sent by the other. Rama is baffled when every time he cuts off one of Ravana's ten heads, another head sprouts in its place. Hundreds of heads are cut off this way, only to reappear again and again.

The rakshasa army and the huge army of monkeys stand transfixed watching the protracted duel between Rama and Ravana. Seeing that Ravana is fighting from a chariot while Rama stands on the ground, the gods watching the spectacle are concerned. Indra, the god of devas sent his charioteer, Matali, along with his chariot for Rama to use.

Rama bows to the gods, circumambulates the divine chariot and ascends it. In the fierce battle that follows, Ravana is injured and becomes temporarily unconscious. Ravana's charioteer carries Ravana away from the battle in the chariot.

Vibhishana then tells Rama the secret of Ravana's heads reappearing. Ravana has obtained *amrita*, the nectar of immortality, from the gods and has stored a vessel of it in his navel and this is causing his heads to regenerate.

Rama is exhausted by the battle. Sage Agastya, and many rishis and gods are all watching the terrific battle from the heavens. Sage Agastya approaches Rama. He advises Rama to worship Lord Aditya, the Sun, to get energy. He teaches Rama the Aditya Hridayam, a

collection of verses in praise of the sun-god, with a view to gaining victory. Rama feels rejuvenated immediately.

When Ravana recovers consciousness a little later, he is furious with his charioteer for taking him from the battle. He insists on being taken back to face Rama. The grim battle begins again. Rama is told by Matali to use Brahmastra as the end of Ravana was near. Rama remembers the quiver Agastya had given Him when he first entered the Dandaka forest. He draws from it a sparkling arrow which is infused with the power of the universe.

Rama utters the required mantra and sends the Brahmastra. The Brahmastra, emitting flames, goes towards Ravana and pierced his navel and shatters the stored nectar. The missile then enters the earth and then returns to the quiver of Rama.

The bow in Ravana's hand slips. The Rakshasa ruler falls to the ground with the sound of a thousand thunderbolts. His crown rolls in the dust. Ravana falls down dead from his chariot to the earth. Ravana is dead, at last.

Seeing the majestic body of Ravana lying motionless, Vibhishana laments that Ravana never paid heed to good advice from his well wishers and has met his death as a result. Rama consoles him and asks him to move on with the next course of action, but Vibhishana hesitates. Rama says that all enmity ends with death and tells him to perform the obsequies of Ravana with due respect.

In the meanwhile the wives of Ravana came to the battle field and wail and cry. Queen Mandodari cries in anguish that it is impossible that a mere man roaming in the forest to kill the invincible Ravana unless it was the Lord himself, and it is destiny that Ravana chose to ignore her caution. Vibhishana performs the funeral rites for Ravana. Then, Rama instructs Lakshmana to arrange for the installation of Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka. Lakshmana arranges to get sea-water from some monkey-chiefs and sprinkles it on Vibhishana, to install him as the King of Lanka, in the presence of the demons there.

Rama then tells Hanuman, with King Vibhishana's permission to convey the happy tidings of Ravana's downfall. Sita is jubilant, and she expresses her heartfelt gratitude to Hanuman. Hanuman asks Sita if he could punish the rakshasi women who tormented her endlessly. But Sita is filled with compassion for these women and says they only did their duty. Then she tells Hanuman to convey to Rama her eagerness to meet him.

Rama hears Hanuman's account, but for some strange reason, his face becomes pensive and clouded. He then tells Vibhishana to bring Sita, after bathing and decorating her in a befitting way. Accordingly, Sita is seated in a palanquin and brought before Rama.

As Sita's palanquin weaves its way through the multitude of *Vanaras*, there is a brief moment of confusion, with *Vanara* leaders pushing back the surging crowd. Everyone wanted to catch and glimpse of Sita, for whom the war had been fought. "Let no one be kept away," says Rama. "These dear Vanaras have risked their lives and helped me."

Questions:

- Where did Hanuman fly to get the healing herbs for Lakshmana? Was this the first time?
- How long did the battle between Ravana and Rama last?
- Whose chariot did Rama use? Who was the charioteer?
- What would happen when Rama cut off one of Ravana's heads? Why?
- Whose hymn did Rama sing to get rejuvenated? What is it called?
- What did Rama use to kill Ravana?
- Who became King of Lanka?
- Did Sita let Hanuman punish the demon women who were holding her? Why or why not?
- What happened when they tried to bring Sita to Rama on a palanquin? What did Rama say?

Mruthyunjaya Mantra: The name means he who is victorious over death. He is a form of Shiva and this prayer which occurs in Rudram is supposed to give us long life as well as helps us to get rid of fear over death.

**Om Tryambakam yajamahe
Sugandhim pushtivardhanam
Urvarurkamiva bhandhanam
Mrityor mukshiya ma -mrtat**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEz9nKIQjil&feature=related>

Meaning:

*We salute and respect,
Him who is naturally scented,
Him who looks after his devotees with mercy,
And him who has three eyes.
And pray and request,
To move us away from the catch of death,
Like the cucumber separated from its stalk,
And firmly put us in the path of salvation.*

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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