

'Abstracts from Ramayana'



**Compiled from the speeches of
*Sadguru Sri NannaGaru***



I have changed the party but all my ancestors (grand - parents and parents) worshipped Rama only. My grandmother knew nothing else except for the Tulasi tree and chanting the name of Rama. They never searched for a new god. Even in my childhood, we never had any other photos other than that of Rama at home. I used to consider only Rama to be God. I was not aware of any other God like Krishna or Shiva.

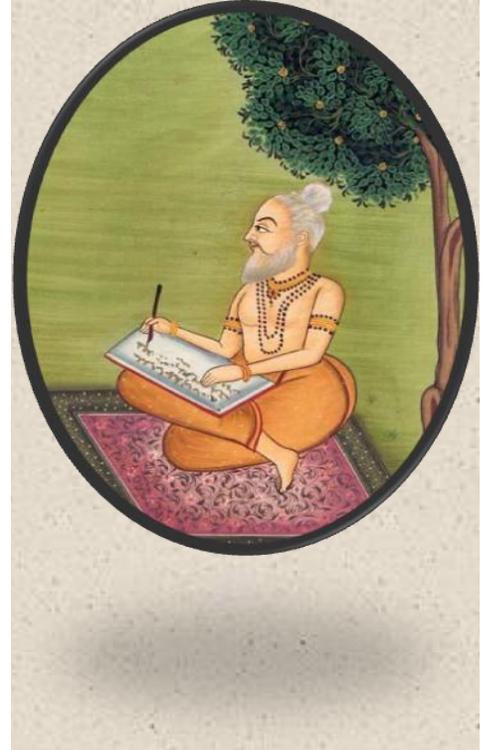
- Sadguru Sri Nannagaru

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An Introduction about Ramayana

That which protects us is Ramayana. When Narada was asked by Valmiki whether anyone existed possessing all the 16 Divine qualities, Narada referred to Rama and described the divine qualities of Rama. He asked Valmiki to write Ramayana and get liberated.



Initially all the literature existed in the form of Mantras. The first scripture that has been converted (from the form of Mantras) into poetic form is Ramayana. Therefore Ramayana is the adikavyam(the first epic) and Valmiki is the adikavi (the first poet).



We don't require several scriptures and several gods. Ramayana is enough for us.

In ancient times, the Guru used to preach the vedas to his disciples, who in turn would preach their disciples. Thus vedas were protected through word of mouth. Currently we don't have the intellect and patience to grasp the essence of vedas. Therefore being inspired by Lord Brahma, Sage Valmiki gave us the essence of all the Vedas in the form of Ramayana.

If the essence of all the four vedas came down as Ramayana, the Self or Supreme God as propagated by the vedas incarnated as Sri Rama. The Divine Mother incarnated as Mother Sita.

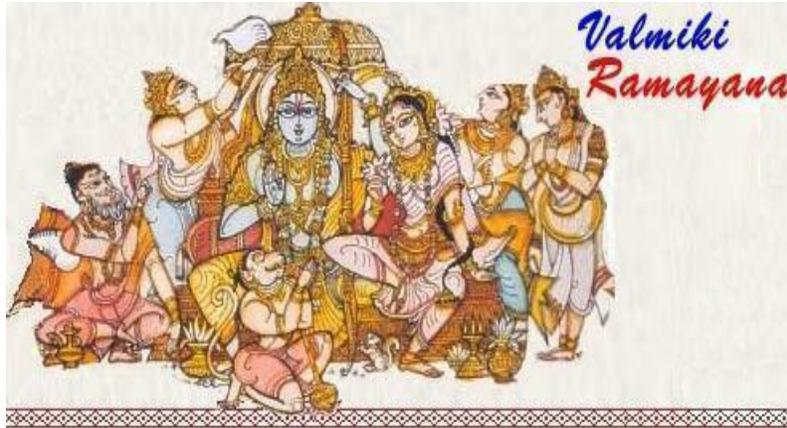
Normally the epics describe not about liberation alone but about all the four Purusharthas i.e., Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha (Virtue, Money, Desire and Liberation). The epics mention as to how to maintain the family relations or the relation with the society, how to cultivate renunciation, how to make the best use of our education and wealth, how to forbear happiness or sorrow etc.,

Even though the epics describe the behaviour that should exist in our day to day life, they depict our goal as liberation alone. This is the



speciality of the epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata.

There are 24000 verses in Ramayana. Valmiki said: “Whether you may believe it or not, there is not even a single lie in all the 24000 verses.”



He further said: "Ramayana is eternal. As long as the rivers and mountains exist, there is no death for Ramayana."

It is divided into 6 Chapters (Kandas). They are: Bala(childhood) kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya(Forest) Kanda, Kishkinda Kanda, Sundara(Beauty) Kanda and Yuddha(war) Kanda. Some people prefer to call Ramayana as Sitayana. They consider it as the story of Sita.

Gandhiji said: "Can anyone read Ramayana without tears in their eyes? It is true Love story."



Normally we see brothers fighting for ancestral property. It is only in Ramayana we see brothers refusing to accept the kingdom.

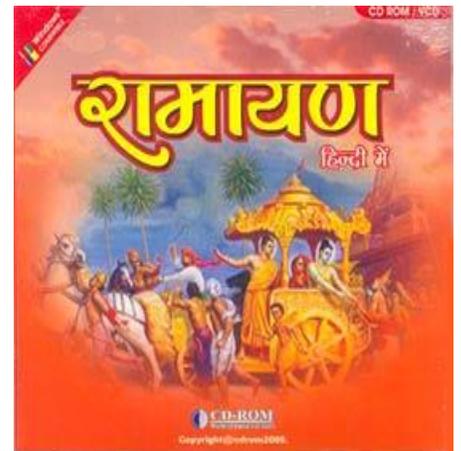
70% of the people in India worship Lord Sri Rama. In India, Krishna is adored by majority of Gujaratis; Mother is worshipped by majority of bengalis; Muruga is adored by the majority of Tamilians and Rama is worshipped by the majority of Andhrites.



Bhadrachala is a pilgrimage centre in Andhra Pradesh(One of the states in India). When Rama was pleased with a devotee called Bhadra's penance, Bhadra asked for the following boon: " I would like to become a mountain on which you should reside forever." Rama said: "Be it so". Therefore Bhadra became Bhadrachala and converted into the abode of Rama. However Rama in Bhadrachala is not Dasaratha Rama but He is Vaikunta Rama ie He has four hands holding shanka and chakra in addition to the normal weapons. Chakra implies the wheel of time and Shanka represents Knowledge. Therefore Bhadrachala Rama is Vaikunta Rama and not Dasaratha Rama.

Rama is the one who resides as Self within our Heart. It is a tradition that whoever is born on Navami attain great fame. Therefore even Rama attained great fame. None of the gods attained the fame of Rama.

In the present scenario it is possible only for Ramayana to protect the unity and love within the family life. The secret of Gayatri mantra is contained in Ramayana.



Rama's life is full of sorrows. Sita and Rama experienced all the hardships that a human being can undergo and thereby became ideal for the entire humanity.

If all the men take Rama as their ideal and if all the women take Sita as their ideal, then the entire society will be turned into gold.

The Glory of chanting the name 'Rama'

Whoever dies in Kashi, Lord Shiva chants the name of Sri Rama (Ram Ramaya Namaha) into their ears in their last moments. Therefore it is called as Taraka mantra ie., the mantra which enables us to cross the ocean of worldliness.



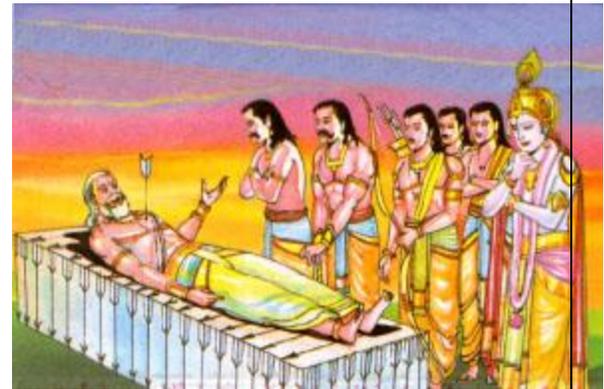
It is very difficult to fight against the force of habits. There is only one solution for it and it is chanting the name of Rama. The name of Rama not only points out all the weaknesses within you but also drags out your impurity and burns it out. Therefore the name of Rama burns out all your tendencies that bring you rebirth.

When the monkeys that trusted the name of Rama got liberated, then why can't we get liberated by chanting the name of Rama?

Though Rama is not with body, there are crores of people who got liberated by chanting the name of Rama. There are some Vaishnavites who love Rama whole-heartedly. They believe that it is enough if one can chant the name of Rama only once. There is not even the necessity of chanting his name for the second time. Such is their belief.



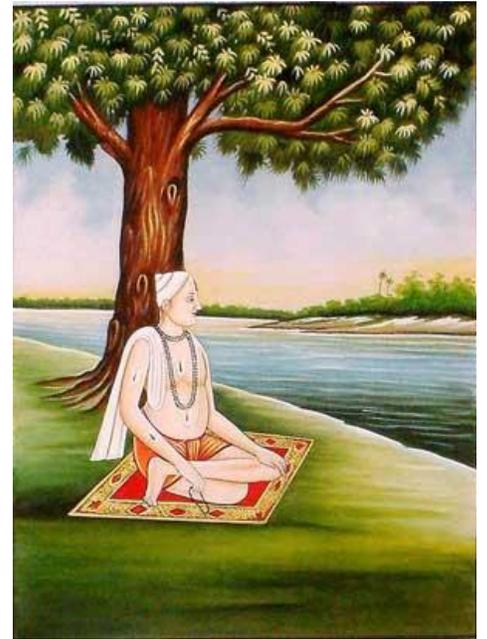
Bheeshma said in the Vishnu Sahasra nama(The 1000 names of Vishnu) that one derives the benefit of chanting the 1000 names of Vishnu on chanting the name of Rama.



Even sugar derived its sweetness only from the name of Rama.

If we chant the name of Rama out of love, we will attain the Grace of Rama. The Upanishads suggest the name: 'Sri Ramaha sharanam Mama (ie I take refuge in Sri Rama).

Tulsidas said: "One need not even chant the whole name of 'Rama'. It is enough even if one says 'Ram' to get purified." It is only the name of Rama which liberates us from the wavering of senses and mind.



Else one can also chant thus: 'Om Sreem Ram Ramaya Namaha'.

Brahma preached Narada the mahamantra for this Kaliyuga(Dark age): 'Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare' , 'Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare'.

The benefits of chanting the name of Rama are: The wandering of the senses and mind reduces, the mind gets concentrated and purified, the intellect will always cling to righteousness, the heart gets widened and we will be inspired to reform ourselves.

The greatest secret is that the name of Rama bestows Prosperity and Wealth.



It is also the easiest one in terms of pronunciation.

Therefore if you have the desire to reform yourselves, you need not read the Vedas or Upanishads; it is enough if you chant the name of Rama. But it should become part of your blood.

Gandhiji was shot dead. Normally we have a great amount of pain when we are bitten by an insect only. Then we immediately forget GOD



and become conscious about the body. Imagine the pain that Gandhiji must have experienced when he was shot dead. Still the words, 'Hey Ram, Hey Ram' came out of his Heart. When he tried to say the same for the third time, he fell down. He uttered twice the name of Rama and when he tried the third time, he died.

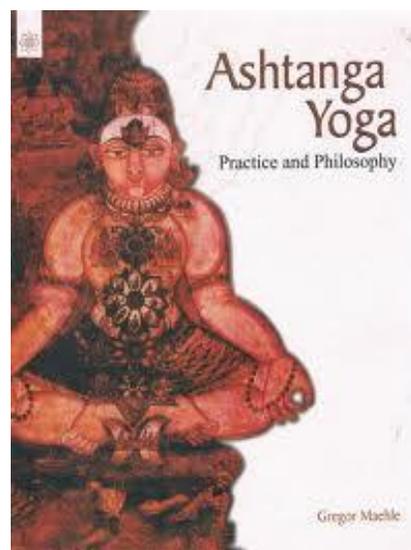
If you chant the name of Rama, it will not generate heat within body which may be possible through Pranayama. It not only cools down the mind and improves your thinking faculty but also treats physical ailments. However you need to possess unwavering lively faith in chanting the name of Rama.

The one who chants the name of Rama need not be aware of the dos and don'ts as mentioned in the scriptures. They will always tread the path of righteousness by default.

If one chants the name of Rama for the sake of wealth, they are blessed with wealth only. However if one chants the name of Rama without any expectation, they are blessed with wealth as well as liberation.

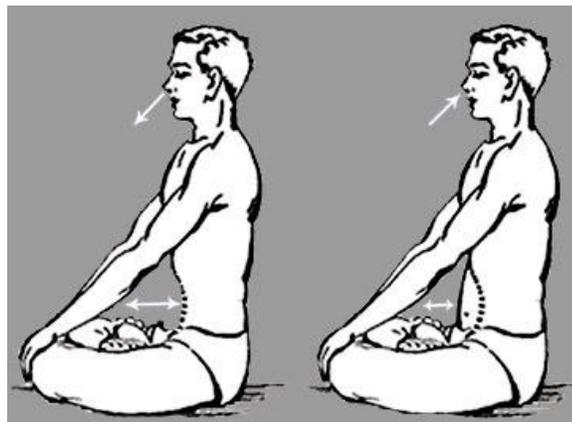
The gold in your house cannot gift you a golden mind. It is only the name of Rama that can turn your mind into gold and beget Vaikunta.

In the ashtanga yoga, we are told about Yama(self restraint), Niyama(observance), pranayama(controlling the breathe), asana(to conquer the



body), Pratyahara (to keep the senses away from sensory objects), dharana (constant contemplation of god), dhyana(meditation) and Samadhi etc., The fruit of ashtanga yoga can be attained by mere chanting of the name of Rama.

One need not toil hard with the techniques like concentration upon breathe etc., If one chants the name of Rama wholeheartedly, the wandering of senses/mind gets reduced, the mind gets introverted and attains Rama

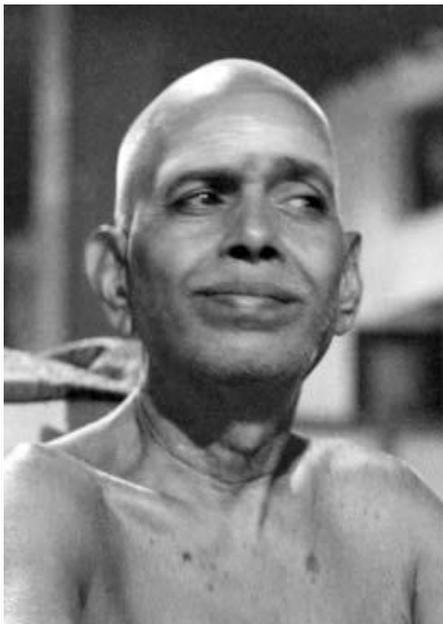


existing in the form of Self. The name of Rama is much greater than the form of Rama.

The chanting of 'Rama' is more than enough for our reformation.

'Sri Rama' as Quoted by His Devotees

We Consider Shiva as an embodiment of Knowledge and Parvathi as an embodiment of Power. Lord Shiva said: "Rama is an embodiment of both Knowledge and Power."



A Devotee asked Bhagwan Ramana: "Is Rama a Jnani?"

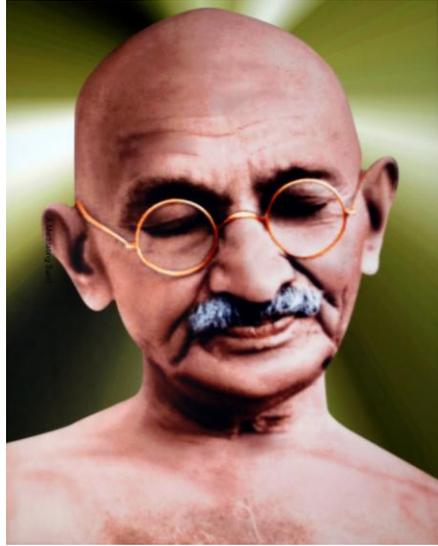
Bhagwan replied: "When we are attaining Jnana (Self Knowledge) by chanting the name of Rama, How can Rama be devoid of Jnana?"

Swami Vivekananda said:

“Where there is Rama, there is no Kama (Lust) and where there is Kama(Lust) there is no Rama.



Valmiki said: “One can count the stars in the sky or count the particles in the mud but one cannot count the good qualities in Rama.” We cannot say that Rama doesn’t possess so and so good quality.



Gandhiji said: "Chanting 'Rama' is sufficient for me irrespective of whether I read all the scriptures or not. We need a boat to cross a river. Similarly I am attaining Bliss and Peace by chanting 'Rama'.

Gandhiji said: "It is only due to the power derived from chanting the name of Rama that I could drive people of different mentalities with unity."

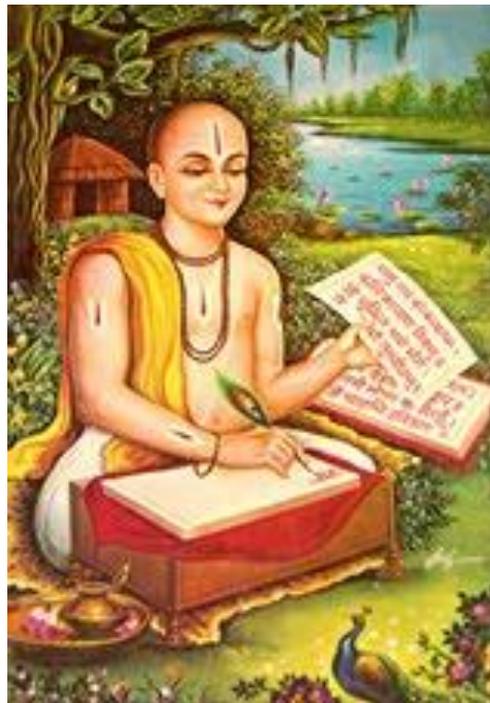
Gandhiji said: " I contemplate upon Dasaratha Rama so that I can attain Atma Rama (ie ., Self within)."



Thyagaraja said: "If you possess the purity of heart equivalent to that of Rama, you will certainly attain a place in His Heart and be attracted by Him."

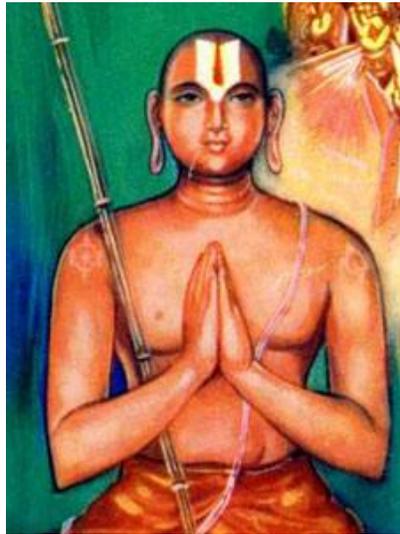
Thyagaraja said: "Oh! Rama, You are an orphan and I am not an orphan for I possess you as my protector. You have become my umbrella but You don't have an umbrella."

Thyagaraja said: "I will not proclaim Rama to be God by merely sitting or walking. I will proclaim Rama to be God sitting on an elephant."



Tulsidas said, "When you develop the qualities of Sri Rama, Sita comes and sits with you."

The Grandeur of Rama's devotees



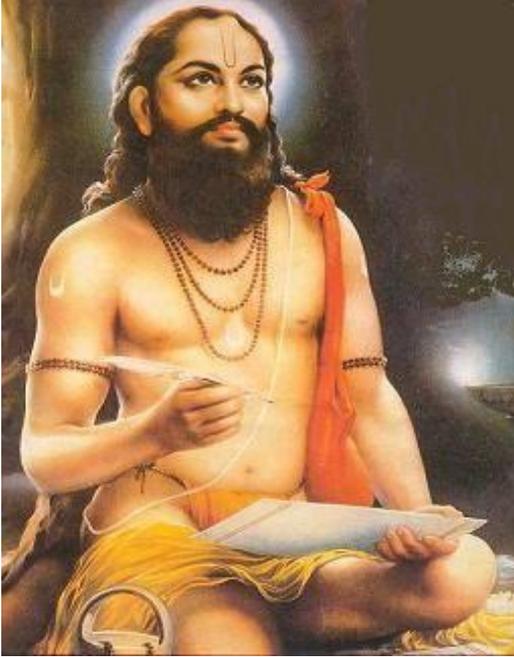
We don't possess Love for Rama. If we have Love for Him, we need not experience pain in the name of spiritual effort. We will unite with Him very naturally. Ramanuja heard Ramayana for 14 times from his uncle. He did not require any other effort. It was sufficient for him in contemplating the great qualities of Rama. When Rama came into forests, he spent his first night sleeping on the floor with his hands under his head using them as a pillow. Whenever Ramanuja heard this, he would tell his uncle: "I am unable to tolerate this. Leave this incident and proceed further."



While reading Ramayana some Vaishnavites said: "Leave out the incidents where Rama was overcome by sorrow. We can't bear the grief of the Lord."



Once Gandhiji visited C.V. Sastry who was hospitalized. On seeing Gandhiji, Sastry said: "Rama, Himself has come to see me." Then Gandhiji scolded him thus: "Ah! Sastry, What nonsense are you speaking? Rama is Rama only. He is incomparable. He is Gentleman personification. Don't ever compare me with Rama. By chanting the name of Rama, I am purifying myself."



Once when Samartha Ramdas, the preceptor of Chatrapathi Shivaji, asked for alms in front of a house, the housewife came out and beat him with the cloth used to prepare dried cow dung. Ramdas

quietly picked up the cloth, washed it, dried it thoroughly and used them as threads in the lamp, lightened to worship Rama.

Then Ramdas prayed thus:

"Oh! Rama, these threads don't belong to me. They belong to that Mother who threw at me the cloth used to prepare dried cow dung. What suffering she must have undergone to act thus. Oh! Lord, do remove all her sufferings."



The king of Tanjavore sent a lot of gold to Thyagaraja in order to honor him. Looking at the gold, Thyagaraja addressed his mind:" You have gold as well as the presence of Rama in front of you? What do you want? Decide Oh! My Mind." Then he got the answer from within: "I want the presence of Rama only." Therefore he sent back the gold to the king.



Ramadas, an ardent devotee of Rama was exiled by king Tanisha for utilizing the money collected from people in the construction of Rama's temple in Bhadrachala. When Ramdas was severely tormented, he prayed Rama:

"Are your words equivalent to Gold? O Lord, Kodandapani (One with a bow in hand) Why don't you respond when I call upon you? Never even in a dream i forget thinking of your name; O my dear Father! O Lord, Why don't you talk to me?"

Finally Rama and Lakshmana disguised themselves as Ramoji and Lakshmoji and cleared the debt of Ramdas. *Some atheists call it as a dream of Tanisha. However if it was merely a dream, then what about the gold coins as given by Ramoji and Lakshmoji? It cannot be a dream.*



In the last moments of Lal Bahadur Shastriji the doctors told him: “We regret that we are unable to help you.” But Shastriji disregarded those words and prayed thus: “Oh! Sri Rama, take me into your lap, Dear Father!” He remembered this prayer during the last moments of his life due to his selfless service to the nation.

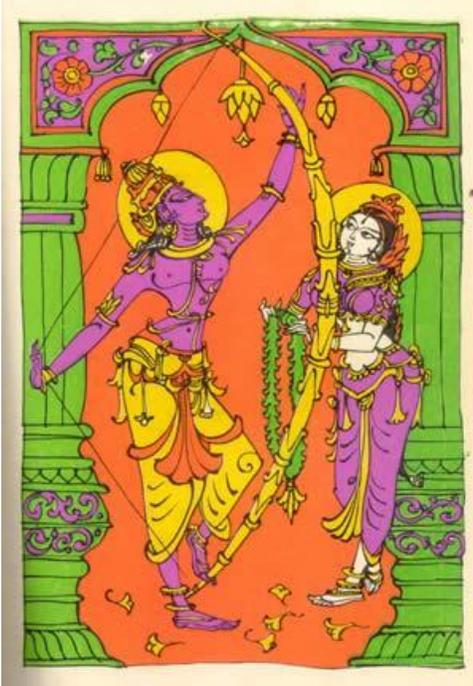
Quotables Quotes on Sri Rama



Rama possessed all the powers and all the divine qualities. He possessed physical strength as well as spiritual strength. In spite of possessing everything, he always enacted as an ordinary man.

Normally we desire other's sacrifice for our happiness. But Rama always sacrificed his happiness for the sake of other's.





Rama exists within the world and the world doesn't exist within Rama. Therefore Rama became God. However the world exists within us and we don't exist within the world. Therefore we became Jivas.

As one watches Rama, one feels like seeing Him again and again. How many ever times one may see Rama, He seems to be Loving.





Lord Rama was: Mitha Bhashi (spoke moderately), Hitha Bhashi (spoke that which is beneficial for others), Poorva Bhashi (spoke to others even before they would speak to him) and Mrudu Bhashi(ie spoke in a manner that would never hurt others). Rama was well aware of where, when and how to speak according to the context.

If we come face to face with Rama, it is Rama who would initiate conversation even before we do.

Valmiki mentions such 16 qualities of Rama.



Valmiki made Maricha, an enemy, to speak thus about Rama: “Rama is dharmavan ie., an embodiment of righteousness. He is Sathyavan ie., who always speaks Truth flawlessly.”

Rama is gentleness personification.

Rama has the name called Gentleman God.

If Righteousness takes a human form, it is Rama.

If Gentleness takes a human form, it is Rama.





What we need to learn from Rama is that we cannot find any person possessing so much gratitude.

Rama neither maintained excessive friendship nor possessed unnecessary enmity with others.



If you want to see God in Human form, see Rama. If you want to see Man attaining the heights of Divinity, see Rama.

Krishna represents Grace and Arjuna represents effort. However Rama is an embodiment of both Grace and effort ie both Krishna and Arjuna are included within Rama.





It is not in the nature of Rama to speak or act hastily. Remember His words, meditate upon His form and chant His name if you want to attain the nature of Rama. If you attain the nature of Rama, you need not go in search of liberation. The liberation itself will knock your doors. Such is the glory of Rama.



In the world history, the first human adventing unto the earth as a 'Super Man' is Sri Rama.

We need not see Rama.
It is enough if Rama looks
at us. If the sight of that
Compassionate one falls
upon us, every obstacle
will be cleared. There will
be no more traffic jam.





Rama represents a bridge to cross the ocean of worldliness. Where there is Rama, there is no mind. Where there is mind, there is no Rama. Therefore place Rama within your Heart. All your work will be done.

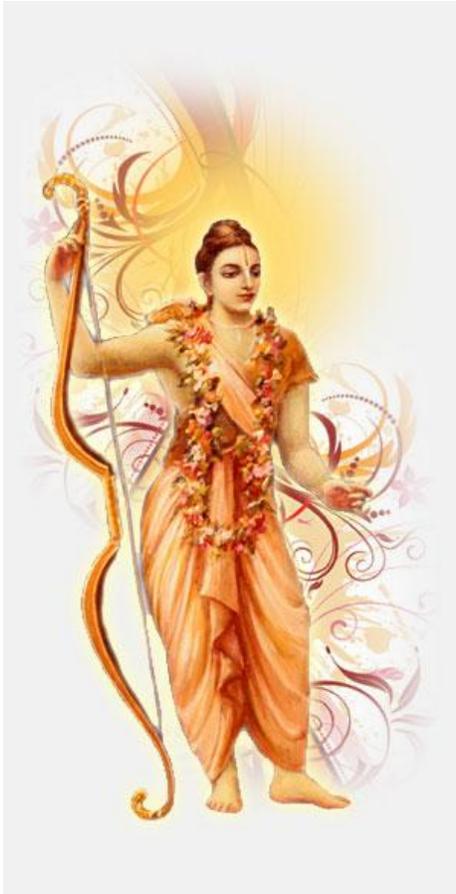


The Atma Rama (Self within us) took birth as son of Dasaratha (Dasaratha Rama).

Even though Rama looks like an ordinary man, don't forget Him to be an incarnation of Vishnu.

If you do so, you will be committing the same mistake as that of Ravana.





Rama came unto this earth not just to kill Ravana but to lead an ideal life and show us the right behaviour pattern.

In spite of being the Supreme Lord, he experienced all the pains that a common man would experience.

It is enough if one takes Rama as an ideal. He will attain Self Knowledge and the 'No Mind state.'





We consider that Rama belongs to the Treta yuga and does not exist now. This is our greatest mistake. But Rama exists here and now. He is very much alive within our Heart. If we possess this faith, we can become the recipients of His Grace.



Even though Rama remained in the body, he was aware that he is not the body. But if anyone called Him as God, he replied: "I am not God. I am the son of Dasaratha."

Rama possessed an ever smiling face. If we remember Rama, our thinking faculty will be reformed.





Though Rama was Lord Vishnu Himself, the consort of Goddess of wealth, the son of a great king and son-in-law of another great king, if any Holy person arrived, Rama Himself would go to them and take their blessings. Such was His greatness.



If we tread the path of Rama, we can attain liberation effortlessly.

What one needs to learn from Rama is that He could bear any amount of insult.





Rama has a name called Bonded-Rama. Rama never left any kind of relationships (like Buddha and Bhagwan). He did not leave his wife or brothers or parents or the people of Ayodhya. After the death of Ravana, someone asked Rama: "Why don't you stay back in Lanka?" Then Rama replied: "I can't leave the people of Ayodhya." Without sacrificing relations, Rama got liberated as well as liberated others.



Rama did his duty but never possessed any attachment. Hence he was always sorrowless. It is only the attachment that breeds sorrow.

The Hindu tradition narrates Rama as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. However Valmiki describes Rama as an incarnation of righteousness. Virtue itself came in the form of Rama.





Rama's form is Blissful. Rama's name is Blissful. This Bliss will bring you the bliss within (relating to Self). Therefore meditate upon the form of Rama and chant his name. You will then reach the Heart where there is Bliss. When you are able to enter the cave of heart where Rama exists, you need not enter the body again ie you need not take rebirth.



The sages define Lord Rama:
"The Mind of Hanuman and
the Supreme Self within us."

Rama tells Hanuman: "If anyone preaches us good words of Knowledge, we should listen to them even if they are younger than us. There is no relation between the age and knowledge."

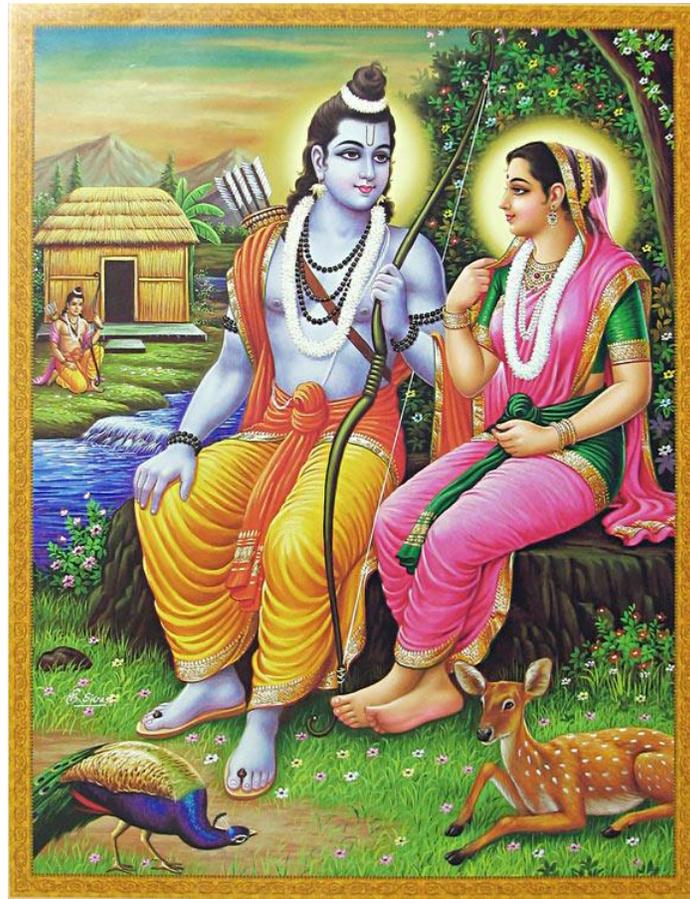




Rama and Krishna are personification of Perfection. Rama and Krishna resemble a Ship and not a boat. They can take ashore (cross the ocean of worldliness) lakhs of people unlike a boat that can carry only few people.

All the Divine qualities (Daivi Sampada) as mentioned in the 12th Chapter of Gita refer to the qualities of Rama only. Whatever Rama showed us practically, Krishna preached the same in the Gita.





If a husband is sorrowful, the wife has to console him and if the wife is sorrowful, the husband has to console her. This represents the virtue of married life.

Sita and Rama possessed such virtue.



Rama is an ideal to us forever. He never possessed the tendency of performing any miracles.

If you have Rama as your ideal, your mind will be under control. You will never tread a wrong path leaving the right path. You will attain liberation.



ABRIDGED VERSION OF RAMAYANA

Dasharatha was the king of Kosala, an ancient kingdom that was located in present day Uttar Pradesh. Ayodhya was its capital. Dasharatha was loved by one and all. His subjects were happy and his kingdom was prosperous. Even though Dasharatha had everything that he desired, he was very sad at heart; he had no children.

During the same time, there lived a powerful Rakshasa king in the island of Ceylon, located just south of India. He was called Ravana. His tyranny knew no bounds, his subjects disturbed the prayers of holy men.

The childless Dasharatha was advised by his family priest Vashishtha to perform a fire sacrifice ceremony to seek the blessings of God for children. Vishnu, the preserver of the universe, decided to manifest himself as the eldest son of Dasharatha in order to kill Ravana. While performing the fire worship ceremony, a majestic figure rose from the sacrificial fire and handed to Dasharatha a bowl of rice pudding, saying, "God is pleased with you and has asked you to distribute this rice pudding (payasa) to your wives - they will soon bear your children."

The king received the gift joyfully and distributed the payasa to his three queens, Kausalya, Kaikeyi, and Sumitra. Kausalya, the eldest queen, gave birth to the eldest son Rama. Bharata, the second son was born to Kaikeyi and Sumitra gave birth to the twins Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Rama's birthday is celebrated now as Ramanavami.

The four princes grew up to be tall, strong, handsome, and brave. Of the four brothers, Rama was closest to Lakshmana and Bharata to Shatrughna. One day, the revered sage Viswamitra came to Ayodhya. Dasharatha was overjoyed and immediately got down from his throne and received him with great honor.

Viswamitra blessed Dasharatha and asked him to send Rama to kill the Rakshasas who were disturbing his fire sacrifice. Rama was then only fifteen years old. Dasharatha was taken aback. Rama was too young for the job. He offered himself, but sage Viswamitra knew better. The sage insisted upon his request and assured the king that Rama would be safe in his hands. Ultimately, Dasharatha agreed to send Rama, along with Lakshmana, to go with Viswamitra. Dasharatha strictly ordered his sons to obey Rishi Viswamitra and fulfill all his wishes. The parents blessed the two young princes. They then departed with the sage (Rishi).

The party of Viswamitra, Rama, and Lakshmana soon reached Dandaka forest where the Rakshasi Tadaka lived with her son Maricha. Viswamitra asked Rama to challenge her. Rama strung his bow and twanged the string. The wild animals ran helter-skelter in fear. Tadaka heard the sound and she became incensed. Mad with rage, roaring thunderously, she rushed at Rama. A fierce battle ensued between the huge Rakshasi and Rama. Finally, Rama pierced her heart with a deadly arrow and Tadaka crashed down to the earth. Viswamitra was pleased. He taught Rama several Mantras (divine chants), with which Rama could summon many divine weapons (by meditation) in order to fight against evil

Viswamitra then proceeded, with Rama and Lakshmana, towards his ashram. When they started the fire sacrifice, Rama and Lakshmana were guarding the place. Suddenly Maricha, Tadaka's ferocious son, arrived with his followers. Rama silently prayed and discharged the newly acquired divine weapons at Maricha. Maricha was thrown many, many miles away into the sea. All other demons were slain by Rama and Lakshmana. Viswamitra completed the sacrifice and the sages rejoiced and blessed the princes.

The next morning, Viswamitra, Rama, and Lakshmana headed towards the city of Mithila, the capital of the kingdom of Janaka. King Janaka invited Viswamitra to attend the great fire sacrifice ceremony that he had arranged. Viswamitra had something in mind - to get Rama married to the lovely daughter of Janaka.

Janaka was a saintly king. He received a bow from Lord Siva. It was strong and heavy.

He wanted his beautiful daughter Sita to marry the bravest and strongest prince in the country. So he had vowed that he would give Sita in marriage only to the one who could string that great bow of Siva. Many had tried before. None could even move the bow, let alone string it.

When Viswamitra arrived with Rama and Lakshmana at the court, King Janaka received them with great respect. Viswamitra introduced Rama and Lakshmana to Janaka and requested that he show the bow of Siva to Rama so that he could try to string it. Janaka looked at the young prince and assented doubtfully. The bow was stored in an iron box mounted on an eight-wheeled chariot. Janaka ordered his men to bring the bow and place it in the middle of a big hall filled with many dignitaries.

Rama then stood up in all humility, picked up the bow with ease, and got ready for the stringing. He placed one end of the bow against his toe, put forth his might, and

bent the bow to string it-when to everyone's surprise the bow snapped in two! Sita was relieved. She had liked Rama right at the first sight.

Dasharatha was immediately informed. He gladly gave his consent to the marriage and came to Mithila with his retinue. Janaka arranged for a grand wedding. Rama and Sita were married. At the same time, the three other brothers were also provided with brides. Lakshmana married Sita's sister Urmila. Bharata and Shatrughna married Sita's cousins Mandavi and Shrutakirti. After the wedding, Viswamitra blessed them all and left for the Himalayas to meditate. Dasharatha returned to Ayodhya with his sons and their new brides. People celebrated the marriage with great pomp and show.

For the next twelve years Rama and Sita lived happily in Ayodhya. Rama was loved by all. He was a joy to his father, Dasharatha, whose heart nearly burst with pride when he beheld his son. As Dasharatha was growing older, he summoned his ministers seeking their opinion about crowning Rama as prince of Ayodhya. They unanimously welcomed the suggestion. Then Dasharatha announced the decision and gave orders for the coronation of Rama. During this time, Bharata and his favorite brother, Shatrughna, had gone to see their maternal grandfather and were absent from Ayodhya.

Kaikeyi, Bharata's mother, was in the palace rejoicing with the other queens, sharing the happy news of Rama's coronation. She loved Rama as her own son; but her wicked maid, Manthara, was unhappy. Manthara wanted Bharata to be the king so she devised a heinous plan to thwart Rama's coronation. As soon as the plan was set firmly in her mind, she rushed to Kaikeyi to tell her.

"What a fool you are!" Manthara said to Kaikeyi, "The king has always loved you more than the other queens. But the moment Rama is crowned, Kausalya will become all powerful and she will make you her slave."

Manthara repeatedly gave her poisoned suggestions, clouding Kaikeyi's mind and heart with suspicion and doubt. Kaikeyi, confused and distraught, finally agreed to Manthara's plan.

"But what can I do to change it?" asked Kaikeyi with a puzzled mind.

Manthara was clever enough to chalk out her plan all the way. She had been waiting for Kaikeyi to ask her advice.

"You may recall that long ago when Dasharatha was badly wounded in the battle field, while fighting with the Asuras, you saved Dasraratha's life by swiftly driving his chariot to safety? At that time Dasharatha offered you two boons. You said you would ask for the boons some other time." Kaikeyi readily remembered.

Manthara continued, "Now the time has come to demand those boons. Ask Dasharatha for your first boon to make Bharat the king of Kosal and for the second boon to banish Rama to the forest for fourteen years."

Kakeyi was a noble-hearted queen, now trapped by Manthara. She agreed to do what Manthara said. Both of them knew that Dasharatha would never fall back on his words.

The night before the coronation, Dasharatha came to Kakeyi to share his happiness at seeing Rama the crown prince of Kosala. But Kakeyi was missing from her apartment. She was in her "anger room". When Dasharatha came to her anger room to inquire, he found his beloved queen lying on the floor with her hair loose and her ornaments cast away.

Dasharatha gently took Kakeyi's head on his lap and asked in a caressing voice, "What is wrong?"

But Kakeyi angrily shook herself free and firmly said; "You have promised me two boons. Now please grant me these two boons. Let Bharata be crowned as king and not Rama. Rama should be banished from the kingdom for fourteen years."

Dasharatha could hardly believe his ears. Unable to bear what he had heard, he fell down unconscious. When he returned to his senses, he cried out in helpless anger, "What has come over you? What harm has Rama done to you? Please ask for anything else but these."

Kakeyi stood firm and refused to yield. Dasharatha fainted and lay on the floor the rest of the night. The next morning, Sumantra, the minister, came to inform Dasharatha that all the preparations for the coronation were ready. But Dasharatha was not in a position to speak to anyone. Kakeyi asked Sumantra to call Rama immediately. When Rama arrived, Dasharatha was sobbing uncontrollably and could only utter "Rama! Rama!"

Rama was alarmed and looked at Kakeyi with surprise, "Did I do anything wrong, mother? I have never seen my father like this before."

"He has something unpleasant to tell you, Rama," replied Kakeyi. "Long ago your father had offered me two boons. Now I demand it." Then Kakeyi told Rama about the boons.

"Is that all mother?" asked Rama with a smile. "Please take it that your boons are granted. Call for Bharata. I shall start for the forest today."

Rama did his pranams to his revered father, Dasharatha, and to his stepmother, Kakeyi, and then left the room. Dasharatha was in shock. He painfully asked his attendants to move him to Kaushalya's apartment. He was waiting for death to ease his pain.

The news of Rama's exile spread like a fire. Lakshmana was furious with his father's decision. Rama simply replied, "Is it worthwhile to sacrifice your principle for the sake of this small kingdom?"

Tears sprang from Lakshmana's eyes and he said in a low voice, "If you must go to the forest, take me along with you." Rama agreed.

Then Rama proceeded to Sita and asked her to stay behind. "Look after my mother, Kausalya, in my absence."

Sita begged, "Have pity on me. A wife's position is always beside her husband. Don't leave me behind. Ill die without you." At last Rama permitted Sita to follow him.

Urmila, Lakshmana's wife, also wanted to go with Lakshmana to the forest. But Lakshmana explained to her the life that he plans to lead for the protection of Rama and Sita.

"If you accompany me, Urmila," Lakshmana said, "I may not be able to fulfill my duties. Please take care of our grieved family members." So Urmila stayed behind on Lakshmana's request.

By that evening Rama, Sita and Lakshmana left Ayodhya on a chariot driven by Sumatra. They were dressed like mendicants (Rishis). The people of Ayodhya ran behind the chariot crying loudly for Rama. By nightfall they all reached the bank of the river, Tamasa. Early the next morning Rama awoke and told Sumantra, "The people of Ayodhya love us very much but we have to be on our own. We must lead the life of a hermit, as I promised. Let us continue our journey before they wake up."

So, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, driven by Sumantra, continued their journey alone. After travelling the entire day they reached the bank of the Ganges and decided to spend the night under a tree near a village of hunters. The chieftain, Guha, came and offered them all the comforts of his house. But Rama replied, "Thank you Guha, I appreciate your offer as a good friend but by accepting your hospitality I will break my promise. Please allow us to sleep here as the hermits do."

Next morning the three, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, said goodbye to Sumantra and Guha and got into a boat to cross the river, Ganges. Rama addressed Sumantra, "Return to Ayodhya and console my father."

By the time Sumantra reached Ayodhya Dasharatha was dead, crying until his last breath, "Rama, Rama, Rama!" Vasishtha sent a messenger to Bharata asking him to return to Ayodhya without disclosing the details.

Bharata immediately returned with Shatrughna. As he entered the city of Ayodhya, he realized that something was terribly wrong. The city was strangely silent. He went straight to his mother, Kaikeyi. She looked pale. Bharat impatiently asked, "Where is father?" He was stunned by the news. Slowly he learned about Ramas exile for fourteen years and Dasharathas demise with the departure of Rama.

Bharata could not believe that his mother was the cause of the disaster. Kakyeyi tried to make Bharata understand that she did it all for him. But Bharata turned away from her with disgust and said, "Don't you know how much I love Rama? This kingdom is worth nothing in his absence. I am ashamed to call you my mother. You are heartless. You killed my father and banished my beloved brother. I will not have anything to do with you for as long as I live." Then Bharata left for Kaushalyas apartment. Kakyeyi realized the mistake she made.

Kaushalya received Bharata with love and affection. Addressing Bharata she said, "Bharata, the kingdom is waiting for you. No one will oppose you for ascending the throne. Now that your father is gone, I would also like to go to the forest and live with Rama."

Bharata could not contain himself any further. He burst into tears and promised Kaushalya to bring Rama back to Ayodhya as quickly as possible. He understood the throne rightfully belonged to Rama. After completing the funeral rites for Dasharatha, Bharata started for Chitrakut where Rama was staying. Bharata halted the army at a respectful distance and walked alone to meet Rama. Seeing Rama, Bharata fell at his feet begging forgiveness for all the wrong doings.

When Rama asked, "How is father?" Bharat began to cry and broke the sad news; "Our father has left for heaven. At the time of his death, he constantly took your name and never recovered from the shock of your departure." Rama collapsed. When he came to senses he went to river, Mandakini, to offer prayers for his departed father.

The next day, Bharata asked Rama to return to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom. But Rama firmly replied, "I cannot possibly disobey my father. You rule the kingdom and I shall carry out my pledge. I will come back home only after fourteen years."

When Bharata realized Ramas firmness in fulfilling his promises, he begged Rama to give him his sandals. Bharata told Rama the sandals will represent Rama and he would carry out the duties of the kingdom only as Ramas representative. Rama gracefully agreed. Bharata carried the sandals to Ayodhya with great reverence. After reaching the capital, he placed the sandals on the throne and ruled the kingdom in Ramas name. He left the palace and lived like a hermit, as Rama did, counting the days of Ramas return.

When Bharata left, Rama went to visit Sage Agastha. Agastha asked Rama to move to Panchavati on the bank of Godavari River. It was a beautiful place. Rama planned to stay at Panchavati for some time. So, Lakshmana quickly put up an elegant hut and they all settled down.

Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, lived in Panchavati. Ravana was then the most powerful Asura king who lived in Lanka (today's Ceylon). One day Surpanakha happened to see Rama and instantly fell in love with him. She requested Rama to be her husband.

Rama was amused, and smilingly said, "As you see I am already married. You can request Lakshmana. He is young, handsome and is alone without his wife."

Surpanakha took Rama's word seriously and approached Lakshmana. Lakshmana said, "I am Rama's servant. You should marry my master and not me, the servant."

Surpanakha got furious with the rejection and attacked Sita in order to devour her. Lakshmana swiftly intervened, and cut off her nose with his dagger. Surpanakha ran away with her bleeding nose, crying in pain, to seek help from her Asura brothers, Khara and Dushana. Both the brothers got red with anger and marched their army towards Panchavati. Rama and Lakshmana faced the Rakshasas and finally they were all killed.

Surpanakha was terror stricken. She immediately flew to Lanka to seek her brother Ravana's protection. Ravana was outraged to see her sister mutilated. Surpanakha described all that happened. Ravana was interested when he heard that Sita is the most beautiful woman in the world, Ravana decided to abduct Sita. Rama loved Sita very much and could not live without her.

Ravana made a plan and went to see Maricha. Maricha had the power of changing himself into any form he wanted along with the appropriate voice imitation. But Maricha was afraid of Rama. He still could not get over the experience he had when Rama shot an arrow that hurled him far into the sea. This happened in Vishwanitra's hermitage. Maricha tried to persuade Ravana to stay away from Rama but Ravana was determined.

"Maricha!" shouted Ravana, "You have only two choices, help me to carry out my plan or prepare for death." Maricha preferred to die in Rama's hand than be killed by Ravana. So he agreed to help Ravana in the abduction of Sita.

Maricha took the form of a beautiful golden deer and began to graze near Rama's cottage in Panchavati. Sita was attracted towards the golden deer and requested Rama to get the golden deer for her. Lakshmana warned that the golden deer may be a demon in disguise. By then Rama already started to chase the deer. He hurriedly instructed Lakshmana to look after Sita and ran after the deer. Very soon Rama realized that the deer is not a real one. He shot an arrow which hit the deer and Maricha was exposed.

Before dying, Maricha imitated Ram's voice and shouted, "Oh Lakshmana! Oh Sita,! Help! Help!"

Sita heard the voice and asked Lakshmana to run and rescue Rama. Lakshmana was hesitant. He was confident that Rama is invincible and the voice was only a fake. He tried to convince Sita but she insisted. Finally Lakshmana agreed. Before his departure, he drew a magic circle, with the tip of his arrow, around the cottage and asked her not to cross the line.

"As long as you stay within the circle you will be safe with the grace of God" said Lakshmana and hurriedly left in search of Rama.

From his hiding place Ravana was watching all that was happening. He was glad that his trick worked. As soon as he found Sita alone, he disguised himself as a hermit and came near Sita's cottage. He stood beyond the protection line of

Lakshmana, and asked for alms (bhiksha). Sita came out with a bowl full of rice to offer to the holy man, while staying within the protection line drawn by Lakshmana. The hermit asked her to come near and offer. Sita was unwilling to cross the line when Ravana pretended to leave the place without alms. As Sita did not want to annoy the sage, she crossed the line to offer the alms.

Ravana did not lose the opportunity. He quickly pounced on Sita and seized her hands, declaring, "I am Ravana, the king of Lanka. Come with me and be my queen." Very soon Ravana's chariot left the ground and flew over the clouds on way to Lanka.

Rama felt distressed when he saw Lakshmana. "Why did you leave Sita alone? The golden deer was Maricha in disguise. "

Lakshman tried to explain the situation when both the brothers suspected a foul play and ran towards the cottage. The cottage was empty, as they feared. They searched, and called out her name but all in vain. Finally they were exhausted. Lakshmana tried to console Rama as best as he could. Suddenly they heard a cry. They ran towards the source and found a wounded eagle lying at the floor. It was Jatayu, the king of eagles and a friend of Dasharatha.

Jatayu narrated with great pain, "I saw Ravana abducting Sita. I attacked him when Ravana cut my wing and made me helpless. Then he flew towards the south." After saying this, Jatayu died on the lap of Rama. Rama and Lakshmana buried Jatayu and then moved towards the south.

On their way, Rama and Lakshmana met a ferocious demon, called Kabandha. Kabandha attacked Rama and Lakshmana. When he was about to devour them, Rama struck Kabandha with a fatal arrow. Before his death, Kabandha disclosed his identity. He had a beautiful form which was changed by a curse to the form of a monster. Kabandha requested Rama and Lakshmana to burn him into ashes and that will bring him back to the old form. He also advised Rama to go to the monkey king Sugriva, who lived in the Rishyamukha mountain, to get help in regaining Sita.

On his way to meet Sugriva, Rama 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, offered them the best nuts and fruits that she collected for years. Then she took Rama's blessings and departed for the heaven.

After a long walk, Rama and Lakshmana reached the Rishyamukha mountain to meet Sugriva. Sugriva had a brother Vali, the king of Kishkindha. They were once good friends. This changed when they went to fight with a giant. The giant ran into a cave and Vali followed him, asking Sugriva to wait outside. Sugriva waited for a long time and then returned to the palace in grief, thinking that Vali was killed. He then became the king upon the request of the minister. After sometime, Vali suddenly appeared. He was mad with Sugriva and blamed him to be a cheater. Vali was strong. He drove Sugriva out of his kingdom and took away his wife. Ever since, Sugriva had been living in the Rishyamukha mountain, which was out of bound for Vali because of a Rishi's curse.

On seeing Rama and Lakshmana from a distance, and not knowing the purpose of their visit, Sugriva sent his close friend Hanuman to find out their identity. Hanuman, disguised as an ascetic, came to Rama and Lakshmana. The brothers told Hanuman of their intention to meet Sugriva because they wanted his help to find Sita. Hanuman was impressed by their courteous behavior and removed his garb. Then he carried the princes on his shoulder to Sugriva. There Hanuman introduced the brothers and narrated their story. He then told Sugriva of their intention to come to him.

In return, Sugriva told his story and sought help from Rama to kill Vali, otherwise, he could not help even if he wanted to. Rama agreed. Hanuman then kindled a fire to bear witness to the alliance made.

In due course, Vali was killed and Sugriva became the king of Kishkindha. Soon after Sugriva took over the kingdom of Vali, he ordered his army to proceed in the search of Sita.

Rama specially called Hanuman and gave his ring saying, "If any one finds Sita, it will be you Hanuman. Keep this ring to prove your identity as my messenger. Give it to Sita when you meet her." Hanuman most respectfully tied up the ring to his waist and joined the search party.

As Sita flew, she dropped her ornaments on the ground. These were traced by the monkey army and it was concluded that Sita was carried southwards. When the monkey (Vanara) army reached the Mahendra Hill, located on the south shore of India, they met Sampati, the brother of Jatayu. Sampati confirmed that Ravana took Sita to Lanka. The monkeys were perplexed , how to cross the huge sea that stretched in front of them.

Angada, the son of Sugriva, asked, "Who can cross the ocean?" silence prevailed, until Hanuman came up to give a try.

Hanuman was the son of Pavana, the wind god. He had a secret gift from his father. He could fly. Hanuman enlarged himself to a huge size and took a jump to cross the ocean. After overcoming many obstacles, at last Hanuman reached Lanka. He soon contracted his body and alighted as a tiny insignificant creature. He soon passed through the city unnoticed and managed to enter the palace quietly. He went through every chamber but could not see Sita.

Finally, Hanuman located Sita in one of the gardens of Ravana, called Ashoka grove (Vana). She was surrounded by the Rakshashis who were guarding her. Hanuman hid on a tree and watched Sita from a distance. She was in deep distress, crying and praying to God for her relief. Hanuman's heart melted in pity. He took Sita as his mother.

Just then Ravana entered the garden and approached Sita. "I have waited enough. Be sensible and become my queen. Rama can not cross the ocean and come through this impregnable city. You better forget about him."

Sita sternly replied, "I have repeatedly told you to return me to Lord Rama before his wrath falls upon you."

Ravana got furious, "You have gone beyond the limits of my patience. You give me no choice than to kill you unless you change your mind. Within a few days I shall be back."

As soon as Ravana left, other Rakshashis, who were attending Sita, came back and suggested her to marry Ravana and enjoy the enviable wealth of Lanka." Sita kept quiet.

Slowly the Rakshashis wandered away, Hanuman came down from his hiding place and gave Rama's ring to Sita. Sita was thrilled. She wanted to hear about Rama and Lakshmana. After conversing for a while Hanuman asked Sita to take a ride on her back to return to Rama. Sita did not agree.

"I do not want to return home secretly" said Sita, "I want Rama to defeat Ravana and take me back with honor."

Hanuman agreed. Then Sita gave her necklace to Hanuman as an evidence confirming their meeting.

Before departing from the Ashoka grove (Vana), Hanuman wanted Ravana to have a lesson for his misconduct. So he began to destroy the Ashoka grove by uprooting the trees. Soon the Rakshasa warriors came running to catch the monkey but were beaten up. The message reached Ravana. He was enraged. He asked Indrajeet, his able son, to capture Hanuman. A fierce battle ensued and Hanuman was finally captured when Indrajeet used the most powerful weapon, the Brahmastra missile. Hanuman was taken to Ravana's court and the captive stood in front of the king.

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 can not 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. The 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.

He 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 mean time 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 Sanjibani, that 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.

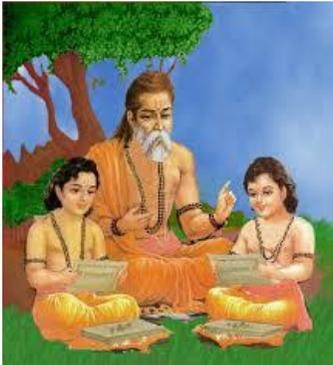
"Rama!" addressed Agni, "Sita is spotless and pure at heart. Take her to Ayodhya. People are waiting there for you." Rama delightfully received her. "Don't I know she is pure? I had to test her for the sake of the world so that the truth may be known to all."

Rama and Sita were now reunited and ascended on a air chariot (Pushpaka Viman), 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.

(Source: <http://www.stephen-knapp.com/>)

Abstracts from Bala Kanda



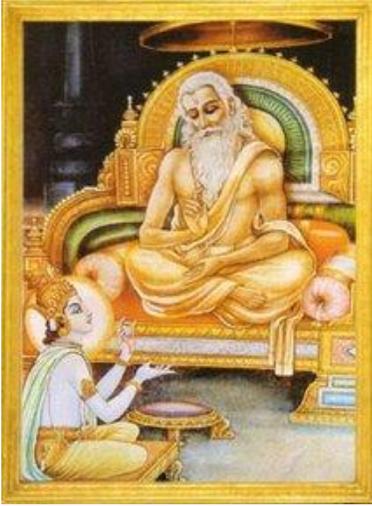
The Glory of Raghuvamsha, the dynasty of Raghu

Rama belonged to the dynasty of Sun. Rama is also called as Raghupathy (Raghu means Sun God). Kalidasa ended his epic Raghuvamsha with the life history of the grand father of



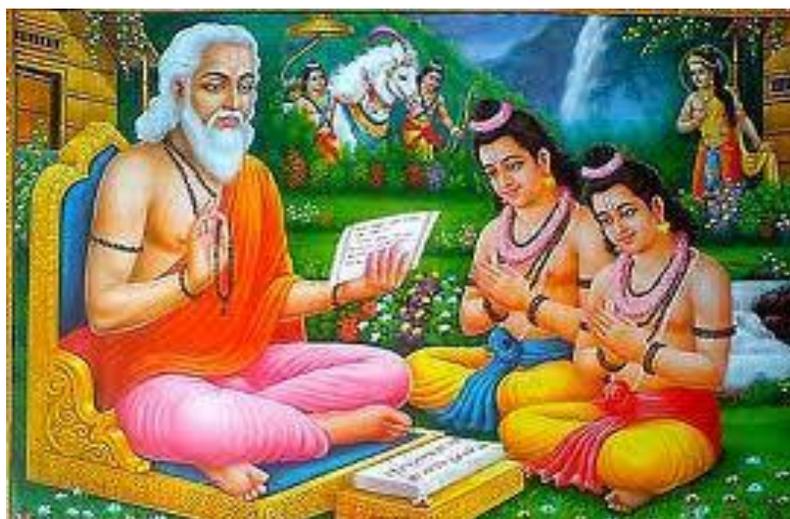
Rama. Even the ancestors of Rama were as great as Rama. But they were not destined to get the fame that Rama possessed. The ancestors of Rama waged wars and won kingdoms. However they returned them back to the losers. They led a married life only for the sake of their successors. Else they were monks at heart. When we look into the eyes of Rama, they seem to be pure and flawless. When anyone asked the reason for same, Rama replied: *“It is because I took birth in the dynasty of Raghu. Not only myself but the eyes of everyone born in the dynasty of Raghu look flawless. There is nothing special about me.”*

Who is that 'I' which says 'I'?



The preachings made by Vashishta to Rama are contained in Yoga Vashishta. It contains 32,000 verses.

Once Rama knocked the door of Vasishtha. Then Vashishta did not come out but asked: "Who is it?" Rama replied: "I (have come)." Vashishta again asked: "Who is that 'I'?" Rama replied: "I am Dasaratha's son, Rama." Vashishta said: "You can reply thus when I ask your name or Father's name. But you were saying 'I'. *Who is that 'I' which says 'I'?*" Then Rama went back and performed intense penance and practically experienced the essence of 'I'.



It is only the Self Knowledge of Rama that enabled him to maintain His composure. The strength of Self Knowledge stops the sorrow. It doesn't allow you to accept the sorrow. When there is Self Knowledge there is neither elation nor depression. It is only Self Knowledge that enables you to transcend the effect of destiny.

The name of Rama performs Magic

Anantha was the childhood friend of Rama who studied along with Rama in the ashram of Vashishta. Anantha never viewed Rama as a king. He considered Rama as his friend.



Anantha served Vashishta and studied in his ashram. When Anantha was engaged in the work of Vashishta, Rama and his brothers were called back to Ayodhya. The reason being, sage Viswamithra wanted Rama and Lakshmana to accompany him to slay down the demons who obstructed his penance. When Anantha returned back from the work, he came to know that Rama left to Ayodhya. So Anantha went all the way to Ayodhya. But when he reached Ayodhya, Rama already left with Vishwamitra.

Anantha thought: "How would Rama kill the demons all alone? Let me also help Rama." Thinking thus Anantha ran towards the forests leaving all his studies. Anantha called out Rama, Rama and constantly contemplated upon Him which brought him the state of samadhi. While being in samadhi, he was totally surrounded by the anthills. Thus He remained in samadhi for several years without any food or sleep. During this time frame, several incidents happened like: Rama leaving Ayodhya and going to forests, Sita being abducted by Ravana, Ravana being slayed down by Rama etc., When Anantha opened his eyes, he saw many rishis, munis going somewhere. When asked as to where they were going, they replied: " Rama is being coronated as the king of Ayodhya. Hence we are going to Ayodhya." Then Anantha followed them to Ayodhya being unaware of any of the above incidents that happened through all these

years. When he reached Ayodhya, all the elderly/important people were seated far away from Rama. But Anantha was calling out Rama not knowing Rama to be God or King. He still considered Rama as his childhood friend.

Everyone was surprised with his behaviour. When he came near, Rama immediately recognized Anantha and hugged him. Then Rama addressed everyone: "All of you address me as 'Sir' or 'Revered Sir', but do you all know this man who addresses me as 'you'? Only he is eligible to address me thus. Previously only my father Dasaratha took the right to address me thus. Therefore this man is equivalent to my Father." Then Rama turned towards Vashishta and revealed that he was none other than Ananatha, his disciple. Then Vashishta hugged both Rama and Anantha.



By mere chanting the name of Rama, Anantha became completely devoid of tendencies. His boundless Love for Rama liberated him.

Anantha said: "I neither desired salvation nor practiced any of the ashtanga yogas but by mere chanting of the name of Rama I became free from every tendency that can exist in this world. *The name of Rama is music to our ears. It is this music that performs magic.*"

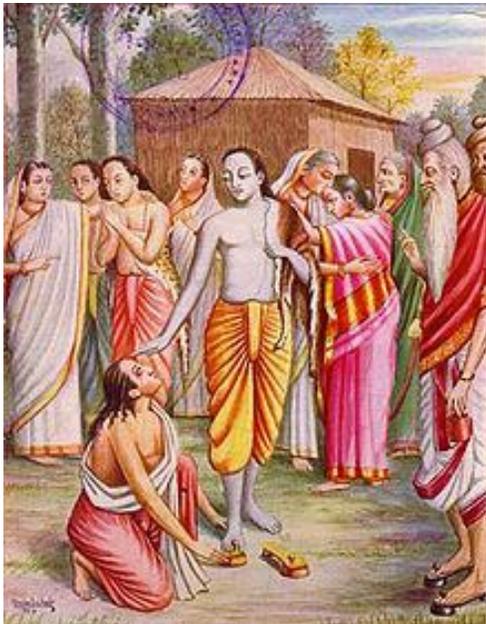
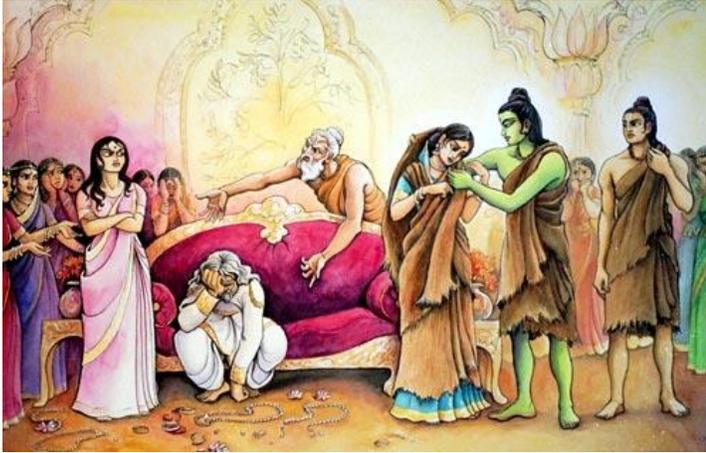
Gautama's curse, a boon to Ahalya



Ahalya, the wife of Gautama Maharishi was seduced by Indra (the king of gods) in the absence of Gautama Maharishi. Therefore Gautama Maharishi cursed both of them as a result of which Ahalya turned into a stone. Ahalya's body became immovable but her mind possessed awareness. Ahalya accepted the curse as the will of God and tolerated it willingly. She was purified due to her forbearance. Rama visited Gautama Maharishi's ashrama on his way to Mithila along with Vishwamitra and Lakshmana.

When touched by Rama's foot, Ahalya's body attained movements. By then she became a great Jnani. When Gautama put his hand on Ahalya, considering her as his wife, she gazed at him very peacefully. Then Gautama felt: "This is not my wife Ahalya. Her gaze seems to be so pure and peaceful!" Thinking thus Gautama immediately left Ahalya's hand. Had Ahalya not been cursed, she would have performed multiple yagas(ritual ceremonies)or viewed multiple ashramas along with her husband. Therefore she would have died as a virtuous and chaste wife after leading a very happy life. But she became a great Jnani only because of the curse. How can one compare a chaste and virtuous wife with a great Jnani? *Was it a curse or a boon to her?* Hence even we should accept all our hardships with tolerance and use them for our spiritual progress.

Abstracts from Ayodhya Kanda



The Greater Son of a Great Father

Dasaratha felt that he should retire and hand over the kingdom to Rama. When he asked for the public opinion, the people said: "*The greater son of a great father.*" ie., Your administration has been good. However Rama can rule us in a much better manner. You have certain attractions and likes & dislikes. But Rama doesn't possess even them."



Duty is God

When Dasaratha announced the coronation of Rama, Rama went to His Mother Kausalya and did not proclaim that He is about to become King.

Rather He said: "*My duty starts from tomorrow.*"



The Equanimity of Rama

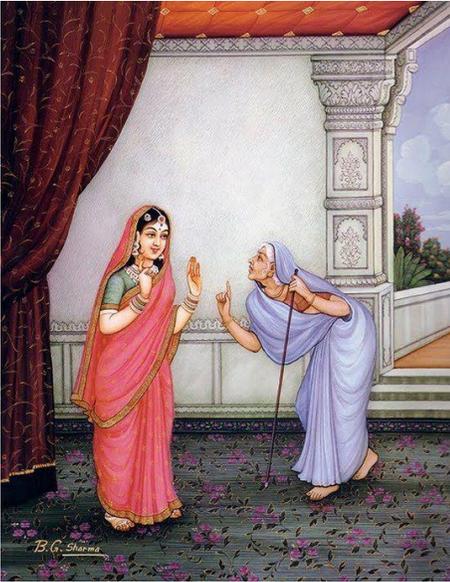
Dasaratha called Rama and told him that he would be coronated as his heir tomorrow. Rama conveyed his consent smilingly. There was no emotion in Rama's face on listening to this news.



Sita who was beside Rama observed this. Within a short time frame, Kaikeyi told Rama that he has to leave Ayodhya and stay in the forests for 14years. Even then Rama possessed the same smiling face devoid of any emotions which was again observed by Sita.

Sita contemplated upon this smiling face of Rama when she was abducted by Ravana and exiled in Lanka.

Manthara, the sin of Ravana



When Manthara entered the room of Kaikeyi, Valmiki states that *the sin of Ravana taking the form of Manthara* entered the room of Kaikeyi.

We will lose our discriminating faculty if we repeatedly listen about the evil. Similarly, Kaikeyi, *the favorite wife* of Dasaratha lost her discrimination on listening to her maid-servant Manthara.



The Inevitable Destiny



It is the destiny that drives our thinking faculty. This is very well depicted in Ramayana. Kaikeyi loved Rama more than Bharata. However a day before coronation, her mind changed. We think that Kaikeyi was influenced by her servant Manthara. Where is the rule that Kaikeyi must change merely by listening to Manthara? There was a probability that Kaikeyi might not have changed even after listening to Manthara.



Rama told Lakshmana: "Kaikeyi is thinking in accordance with our destiny. Till date Kaikeyi possessed immense love for us. However today her love turned into hatred and therefore wants to send us to forest. Perhaps there is some work to be done with this body in the forest and it has changed the mind of Kaikeyi accordingly. Kaikeyi got this thought only in accordance with our destiny. Therefore have no anger or hatred for Kaikeyi. It is only God's will that will be fulfilled.

Let's abide by the same."

Rama as tolerant as Earth



Valmiki said: "*Rama possessed the tolerance that the earth would possess.* Who can equal Rama in tolerance? "When Rama refused to take Sita to forest along with him, Sita felt that Rama is avoiding to take the responsibility of protecting her in the forests. Sita said:" Oh! Rama, You look like a man externally but you are a woman within." When Rama was blamed thus by Sita, Rama understood that she blamed him unable to tolerate his separation. Therefore Rama did not react to her words and remained calm.

Tread the Path of virtue even in distress

After leaving Rama in the forest, the chariot asks Rama as to what message needs to be conveyed to his Mother, Kaushalya. Rama said: "Now I have come to the forest. My Mother would be much disturbed due to her attachment for me. When the mind is peaceful, everybody tend to tread the path of virtue. However on being disturbed, everyone tend to leave the path of righteousness. Whatever happened has been against her wish. Still ask her to cling to the path of righteousness. At any point of time it is only the virtue that would protect her." Therefore what Rama indicated here is: Everyone treads the path of righteousness when situations are favourable. However one needs to *tread the path of virtue even when situations are unfavourable.*



Guha, the Great Devotee



While taking Rama ashore, *Guha* said: "The dust of your feet converted a stone into a woman (Ahalya). If you step into my boat, what will happen to my livelihood? The reason being even my boat would convert into a woman by the dust of your feet. Therefore let me cleanse your feet (so that there is no dust left) before you get into my boat. *When you transformed a stone into a woman, have I become a burden for you? Can't you liberate me? "*

The Water of Mandakini river resemble the Heart of a Holy Man



After entering the forests, Rama at first stayed in Chitrakoot, which was owned by Lord Shiva. Therefore Rama asked Lakshmana to take Shiva's permission to stay there. Lord Shiva said,

"You can stay in Chitrakoot only on two conditions. One you should control your tongue ie not eat every kind of food and secondly you should maintain celibacy." When Lakshmana informed Rama of these two conditions, Rama said:

"Irrespective of whether we live in Chitrakoot or not, aren't we already abiding by these principles?" In Chitrakoot, the river Mandakini flowed evenly in all the seasons ie., it never got floods. Rama loved the water of the river Mandakini so much that he bathed in the river thrice a day. The water of Mandakini was very pure. The water was so thin that one can view even the needle or a coin that falls into the river. We could view our faces in the river as we view them in a mirror.

When Sita told Rama: "Look at the purity of water in the river Mandakini." Rama replied: "Yes, this water resembles *the Heart of a Holy Man (Satpurusha)*."

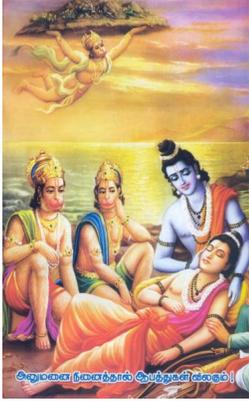
If we can attain such a pure Heart, Grace would shower upon us as a rain and drench our Sahasrara.

Jitendriya and Ateendriya



Rama and Lakshmana can never be separated. Where there is Rama, there is Lakshmana. MahaVishnu incarnated as Sri Rama and the Aadishesha(the serpant on which Vishnu stays) incarnated as Lakshmana.

Lakshmana never uttered anything wrong towards Rama. Lakshmana was married but in the service of Rama he was never reminded of his wife.



Lakshmana left his wife, Mother, the people of Ayodhya and all the pleasures and accompanied Rama to the forests. In spite of sacrificing everything and everyone, Lakshmana lived happily in the forests. It was because he was near Rama. Therefore how many ever pleasures one may possess, sorrow is inevitable to the one who leaves Rama. In the war between Rama and Ravana, when Lakshmana fainted, Rama cried out saying: "I may find a wife like Sita but not a brother like Lakshmana."

Lakshmana is called as *Jitendriya* ie., *the one who has controlled his senses* whereas Rama is called as *Ateendriya* ie *the one who has transcended his senses* ie he has no senses to control and is beyond them(Supreme Self).



Unconditional Service and Surrender



When Rama reached Chitrakoota, he asked Lakshmana to build a hut. Lakshmana asked Rama the exact place to build. Rama told Lakshmana: "You think out and choose a place that you consider most suitable." Then Lakshmana replied: "Don't make me a big man. I only know to abide by your order. I only deserve to build the hut wherever you may direct me to do so." Lakshmana indicated Rama not to make him independent.

It implies when you don't want to become independent, Surrender yourself to the Supreme Lord. There is a danger of becoming proud if you become independent.



Once Rama told Lakshmana: "Bharatha is very close to my heart." Then Lakshmana did not get any kind of reaction. Rather he made Rama's will as his own. Therefore Lakshmana replied: "Even I love Bharata."

Lakshmana did not even get the thought: "In spite of doing so much service, Rama proclaims Bharata to be closer to His Heart and not Me!"

That is *Unconditional Service and Surrender*.

Even thoughts are included within destiny



Lakshmana told Rama: "Bharatha is good at heart but not Kaikeyi." Rama immediately said: "Stop! Lakshmana. You stop it there. When there are two people they should always speak good about the third person but not bad about him. When you talk about Kaikeyi, you are forgetting one thing. Dasaratha tried to conduct my coronation only after getting a thought. Kaikeyi asked us to leave Ayodhya and go into the forests only after getting a thought. Both of our destinies contain forest life. It is only the Supreme Lord who brought these thoughts to Dasaratha and Kaikeyi as per our destiny. Unable to understand this, we are making Kaikeyi the scapegoat."

Even thoughts are included within destiny.

'Bharatha' was born only to bear burden



All of us chant Rama! Rama! But Rama used to chant Bharatha! Bharatha!

Kausalya, Dasaratha and the people of Ayodhya doubted that even Bharatha participated in the conspiracy of Kaikeyi and hence went far away to his grandparents when Rama was banished from Ayodhya. Hence they hated Bharatha. Bharatha tolerated this entire rebuke for the mistake of his Mother. It is easy to rule the people who respect you. It is very difficult to rule the people who hate you or blame you. However it was only out of Love for Rama that Bharatha accepted to rule the Kingdom till Rama came back.

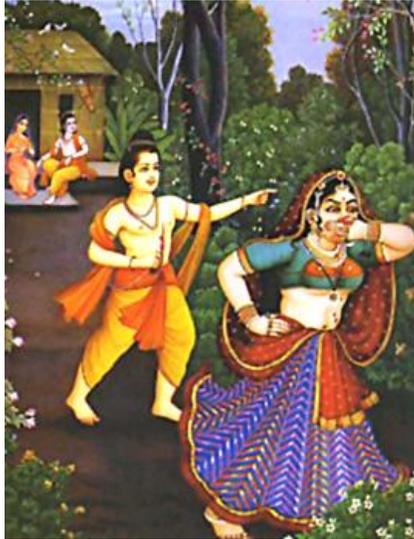
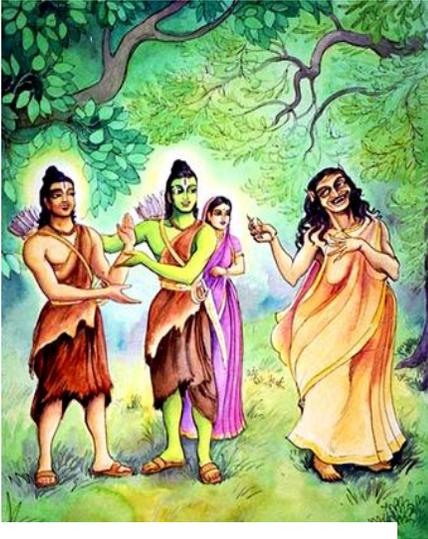
Bharatha was born only to bear burden.

Everything is Predetermined

While Rama stayed in Chitrakoota, Bharatha approached Rama and pleaded with Him to come back home ignoring the words of Kaikeyi and Dasaratha. Rama then replied: "I have to stay in the forests for 14yrs and you have to rule the kingdom. This is the will of GOD. It is irrelevant as to what Dasaratha or Kaikeyi said. We have to act according to the will of GOD. Even before we came unto this earth *everything about us is predetermined* ie How long we have to live on this earth, where should we stay, what work should we carry on, the date on which our body should go to graveyard etc., All of us do not represent the lost kites. We are within the control of GOD. We are unable to realize this as we consider ourselves to be separate from GOD."



Abstracts from Aranya Kanda(The Forest Life)

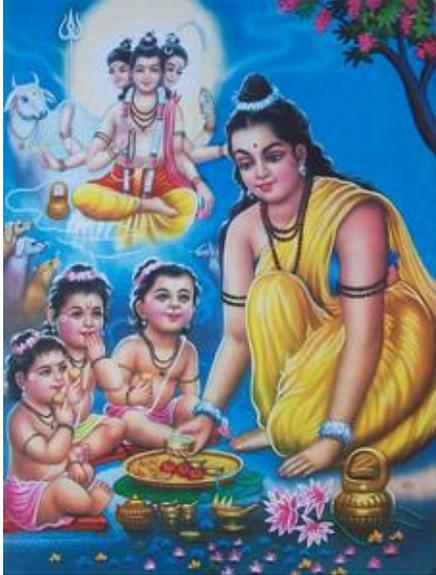


Humility, the sign of great people



Rama has the habit of respecting the elders. During his stay in the forest Rama used to personally visit the rishis and maharishis. Atri Maharishi said, "Oh! Rama, leaving out your ignorance and ego sense you came down to forest from your kingdom. You are acting as if trying to learn something from us. We belong to the category of Jivas but you belong to the category of Ishwara koti. You came to us only to bring us honor. What is left out for you to learn? You are the Supreme Lord. But you are enacting as if trying to learn something from us. It is only to bring us honor. It will be told in the Ramayana that Rama visited so and so rishi and hence will bring us the honor. What do you not know? You are omniscient." This is *the sign of great people*.

Silence, the essence of Supreme Self



Anasuya, the wife of Atri Maharishi said:

“Sita, You are wearing the saris made of coir(nara). You have accepted the forest life without any struggle. Here itself your greatness is revealed.”

She further asked: “I never saw your husband Rama. Can you show me Rama?”

Then Anasuya started pointing out each one seated there (as some people came to see Rama) and

asked Sita if he is Rama. Sita did not speak out but displayed her dissent by shaking her head whenever Anasuya pointed out wrongly. When Anasuya correctly pointed out Rama, Sita became Silent not displaying her dissent.

Similarly when we keep on rejecting Non Self (that which we are not) only then do we realize the Self, our true nature. We will not shut our mouth until we realize Self.

When we realize Self, the senses stop working ie., there is nothing to be viewed about or listened to; there would be no tendencies that can bring about rebirth.

Silence is the essence of Supreme Self.

The Positive thinking of Rama



When Sita regretted over their hardships in the forest life, Rama replied: “The life in Ayodhya is full of responsibility. Can we ever imagine this peaceful life of enjoying the natural beauty and the Holy Company of sages in Ayodhya? Are we not lucky for having attained this forest life? ” Sita was pacified with these soothing words.

Thus Rama could accept any situation *positively*.

There is a purpose for our birth



Once Sita said: "The Rakshasas are harming only the rishis and people. They are not harming us. Why should we develop enmity towards them?" Rama replied: "*There is a purpose with which our bodies came unto this earth.* If the Rakshasas are not killed, what is the purpose of our advent unto this earth? "

Rama, the great warrior



Rama was not only a Holy man but also a *great warrior*. When 14000 demons were approaching Rama like a Tsunami in the Dandaka aranya (a forest by name Dandaka) Rama said: "Lakshmana you sit down and take care of Sita. I am alone enough for these demons." Without dropping down the bow that has been raised, Rama killed all the 14000 demons singlehandedly within a short time frame.

Surpanaka, the great avenger



Surpanaka, the sister of Ravana was enchanted by the beauty of Rama. She approached Rama and asked Him to marry her. Rama replied that he was bound by the vow of possessing a single wife and hence cannot fulfill her desire. Rama directed her towards Lakshmana. When even Lakshmana rejected her, she grew angry and wanted to kill

Sita, considering her as an obstacle for her marriage with Rama. Then Lakshmana cut her nose and ears. Being disfigured by Lakshmana, Surpanaka approached her brother Ravana.

Ravana was so strong that even the five elements feared him. Surpanaka did not tell him the fact as to why she has been disfigured. Rather she provoked Ravana's lust for Sita in order to take her revenge.

She spoke thus: "Sita is the most beautiful lady in this world. She does not deserve to live in the forest with Rama. She deserves to live in Lanka as your queen. Therefore I tried to bring her to Lanka as a result of which Lakshmana mutilated me. You brought every wonderful thing in this world into Lanka. Leave about fulfilling your lust. Don't you think that the place of the most beautiful woman in the world should be Lanka?" Thus *Surpanaka avenged by provoking Ravana.*

Light cannot be forced into the lives of those who are habituated to living in the dark

Ravana asked Maricha to take the form of a golden deer and deceive Rama so that he can abduct Sita. After

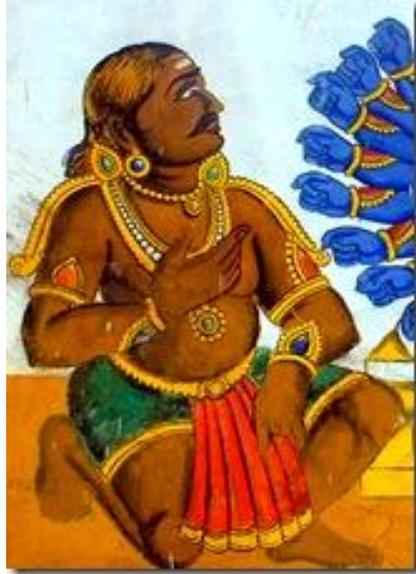


tasting the arrow of Rama, Maricha reduced his demonic nature and attained complete transformation. Therefore Maricha tried to prevent Ravana in indulging such non-righteous act. Maricha told Ravana: "I already tasted the arrow of Rama. I have not been killed but have been thrown into the ocean from earth. It is enough if Rama touches us. He need not even target an arrow. He is most Powerful (Ati Balavan)."

When Ravana didnot agree, Maricha thought:

"Death is inevitable for me. All my planets are indicating my death. If I don't obey Ravana, he will kill me. If I obey Ravana, I will be killed by Rama.

It is better to die in the hands of Supreme Lord Rama so that I can attain Liberation."



Before taking the form of a golden deer, Maricha said: "The darkness hates light. The bad hates the good. Ignorance hates Knowledge. *If you try to bring someone from darkness into light they will not agree for the same as they are habituated to living in the dark.*"

The Thinking Faculty is driven by Destiny



Sita said: "The golden deer looks very attractive. Why dont we take it to Ayodhya?" How could Rama (with such discriminating faculty) believe that a golden deer existed?

Valmiki describes it as destiny.

Buddhi Karmanusarena ie.,

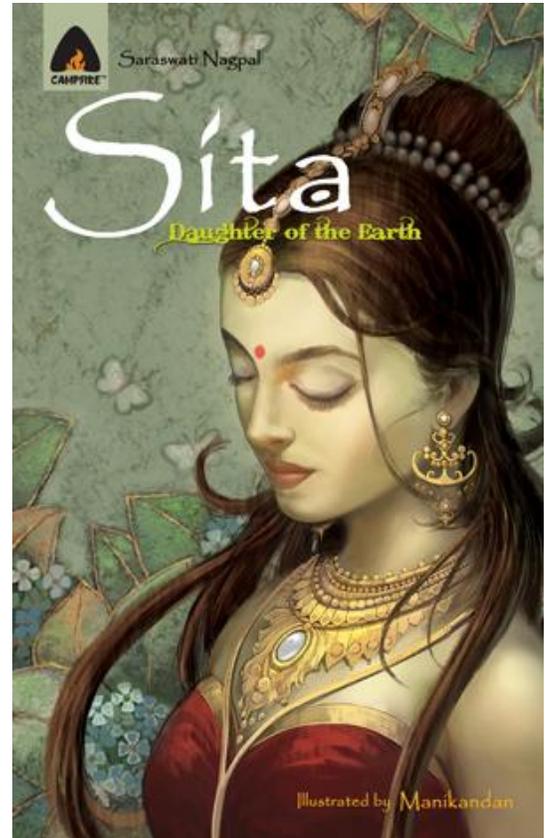
The thinking faculty is driven by destiny.



They were driven by destiny so that the purpose for which they came unto the earth would be fulfilled. This caused Rama's separation from Sita for 10 months. Not only Rama, God does not allow us to discriminate when we have bad days ahead. Doesn't Rama know that a golden deer won't exist? Running behind the golden deer was destiny of the body. Rama has to go far away. Ravana has to abduct Sita and Rama has to kill Ravana. The body dies only after completion of the work which it has been destined to do.

Beware of the words that you speak

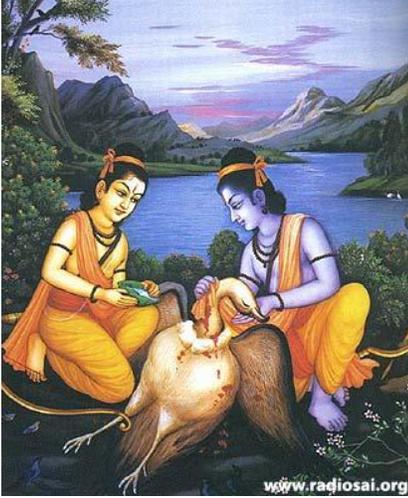
Rama went in search of the golden deer at the behest of Sita. Then they heard a wailing cry. Sita thought that Rama was in distress and hence asked Lakshmana to go and help Rama. However Lakshmana refused to go leaving Sita alone. Then Sita spoke harshly and accusingly: "Lakshmana! Do you think that I will come and live with you if Rama passes away?" One should be very *careful in their words*. As Lakshmana refused to go in search of Rama, Sita abused him. This led to the war between Rama and Ravana.



Jatayu, the second father of Rama



When Ravana was abducting Sita, Jatayu (the eagle) sacrificed its life in an attempt to stop Ravana. This is called as selfless work. In spite of being a bird, Jatayu fought selflessly in order to protect a helpless woman. Jatayu is only our true guru.



Jatayu attained the good luck that Dasaratha could not gain. Rama could not conduct the funeral rites of Dasaratha as he was not in Ayodhya when Dasaratha expired. However he conducted the funeral rites of Jatayu with his own hands. Rama didnot stop here. He said: "Oh! Jatayu, Dasaratha gave me only this body. But you have sacrificed your life for my sake. *You are my second Father!* Go to those Higher worlds which is attained by Mahatmas, Maharishis, rishis and great yogis. This is Rama's order."

We need not think of God.

It is enough if God thinks about us.

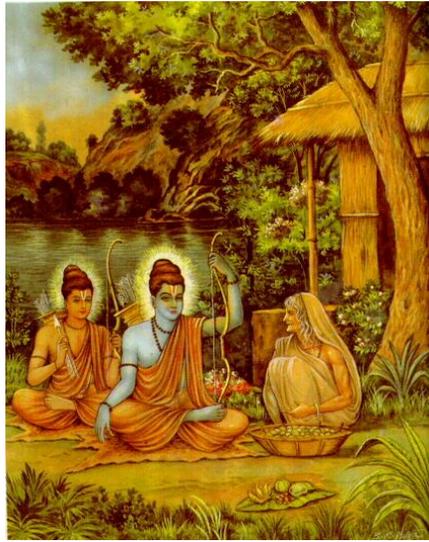
There was no despair in Shabari's long wait



There was a huge gathering of various animals like sheep and goat on a day before Shabari's marriage. Shabari was surprised on seeing them. When she asked her parents the reason for the same, She was told that they will be killed and cooked as food for the relatives and guests who will be attending her marriage. Then Shabari questioned them: "Why should these innocent animals be killed on account of my marriage? What kind of marriage is this?"

She came into the fold of the fruit of her past good deeds. The good that we do will accompany us even after a hundred births. The good that we do will beget good and the bad that we do will beget bad. The fruit of her past good deeds suddenly awakened her. Shabari felt that these innocent animals should not be killed on account of her and so she fled away in the night when everyone was fast asleep. Some people don't know how to think about themselves. Some people don't even care as to what they eat or as to what clothes they wear. They always think about others only. Such people have been described by the scriptures thus:

"God has created some souls to live for others".

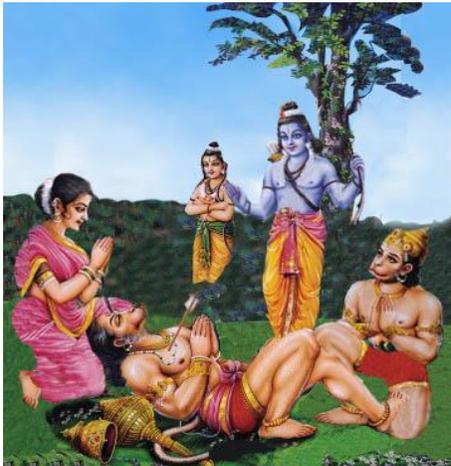
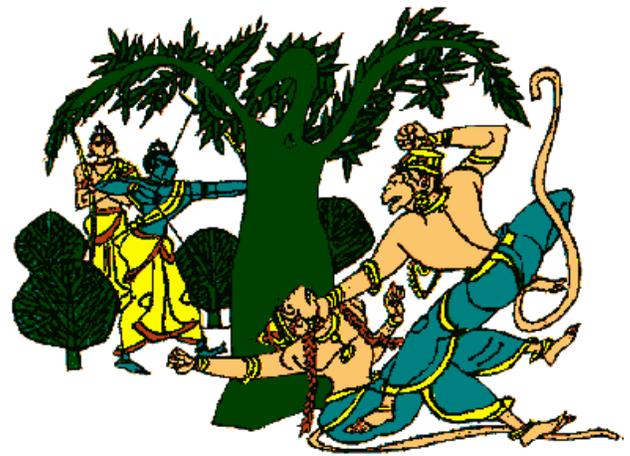
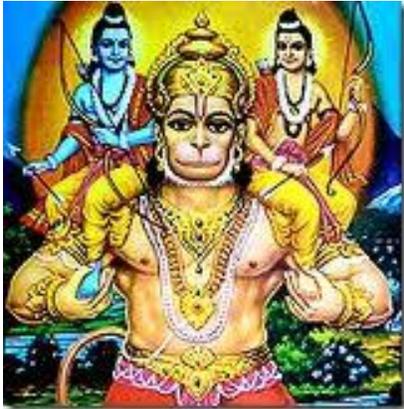
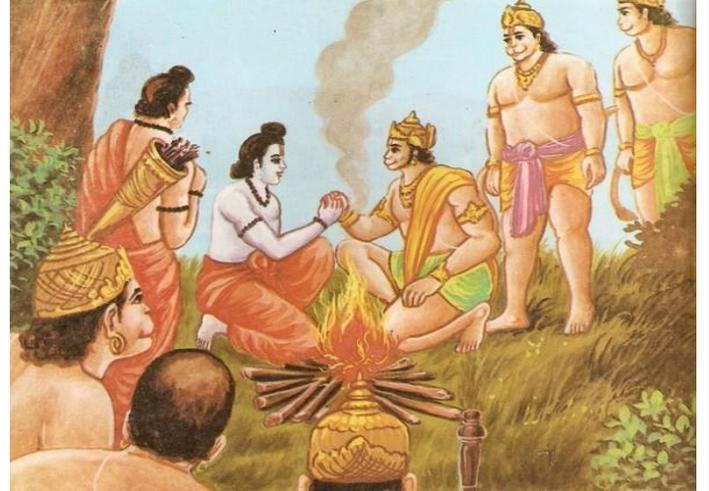
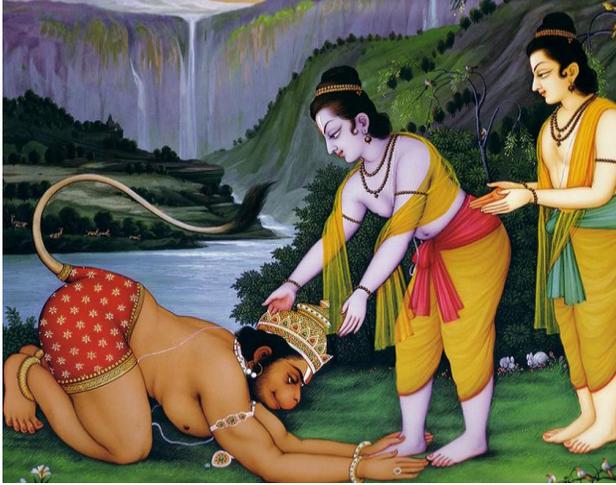


Shabari travelled a lot and atlast reached her guru Matanga maharishi. Shabari served her guru for a considerable amount of time. One day Matanga Maharishi called her and said," I am leaving tomorrow." Then Shabari asked him, "Please take me along with you where ever you are going." Matanga maharishi replied," You served me a lot. Even though I may wish to take you along with me, *no two people can travel together to the place where I am going.*" When Shabari asked, "Then what about me?", he replied saying," You are a blessed soul, Shabari. Though I am your Guru, you

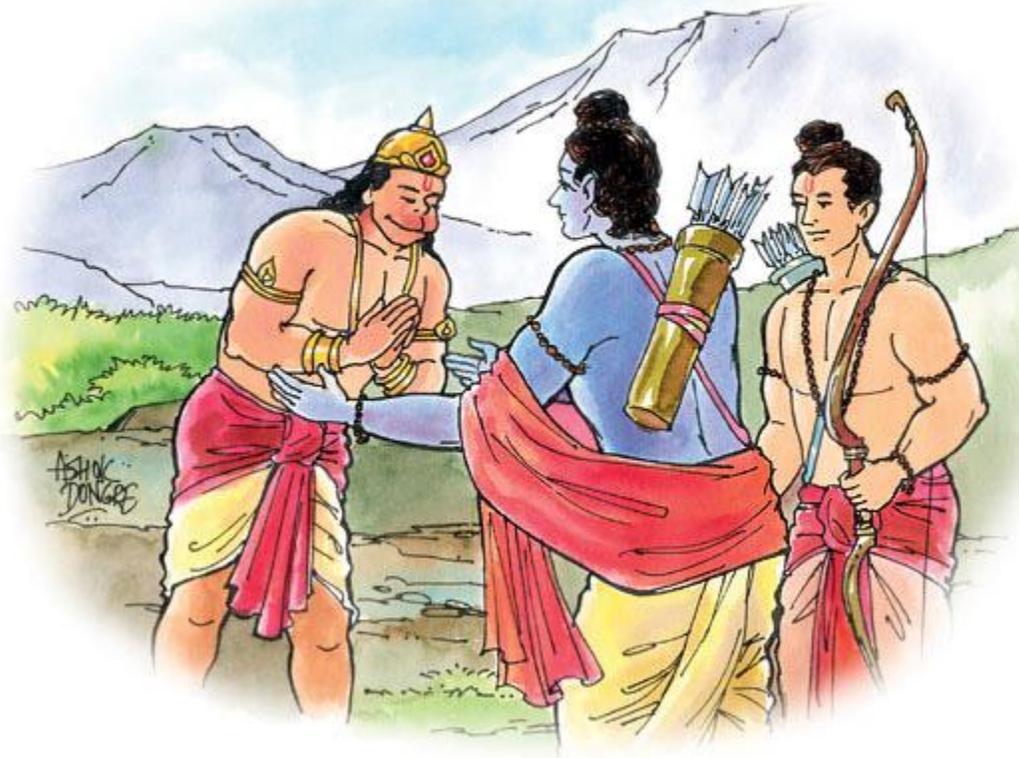
are much luckier than me. We are making efforts to know God. We cannot reap the fruits without making the required efforts. Lazy people cannot achieve anything. One has to make efforts to achieve anything either in this world or the other worlds. But Shabari you don't require any efforts. You need not travel to see God for Lord Rama Himself will come to you and liberate you. Do not leave this ashram. Stay here and wait till Lord Ramachandra comes." Shabari accordingly waited for Sri Rama for many years. *There was no despair in her long wait.* This is the fruit of shabari's good deeds. When Rama came to Shabari, she first tasted the fruits (to test that they were not spoiled) and then offered them to Rama. Pleased with her devotion, Rama granted her liberation.

Devotion was more important to Rama than caste.

Abstracts from Kishkinda Kanda

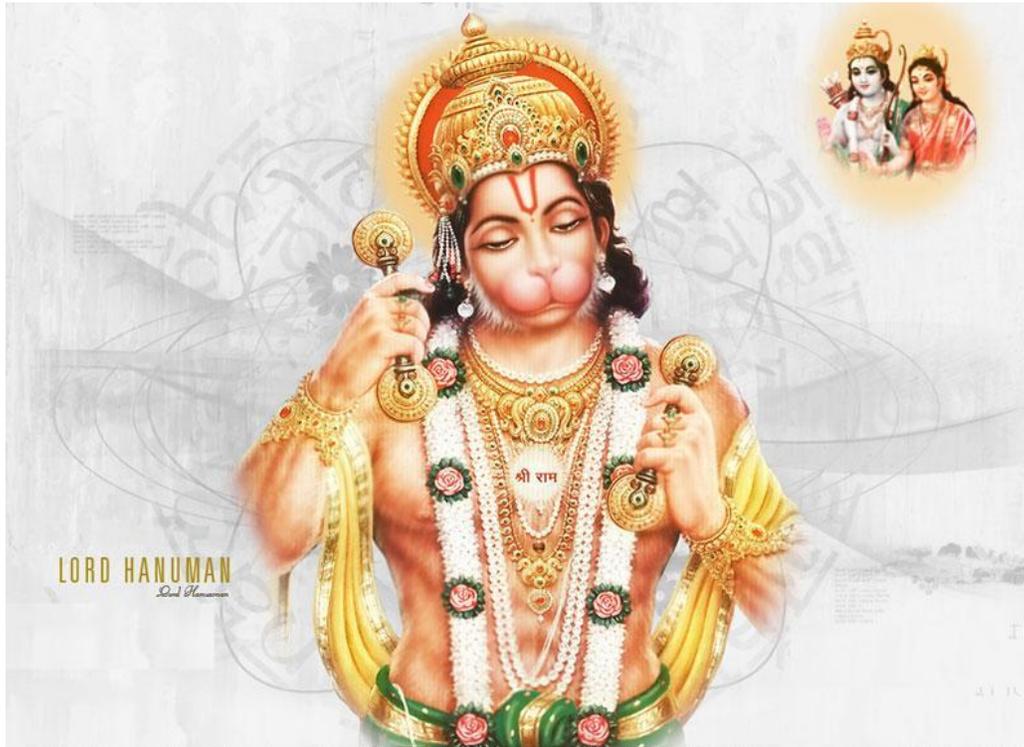


Hanuman, the Great Scholar



Rama and Lakshmana reached Kishkinda in search of Sita. Then Sugriva lived on a mountain where his brother Vali cannot enter due to a curse. Considering that Vali has sent them to slay him down, Sugriva sent Hanuman to find out the details as to whether they were travelers or sent by Vali.

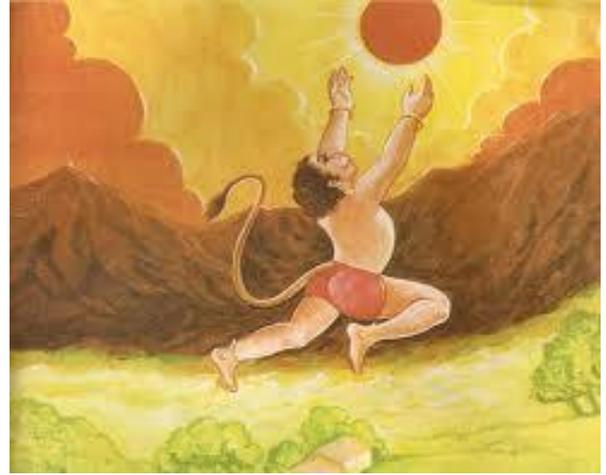
There were no mediators to introduce each other. Then Hanuman taking the form of a Brahmin appeared in front of them and introduced himself thus: "I am Hanuman, the minister of Sugriva. I came here to find out your details. Your faces resemble that of king's but you are dressed like ascetics/monks. I have introduced myself. Please give me your introduction now." Even Rama became surprised with the beauty of Hanuman's language. When Lakshmana was about to give introduction, Rama stopped him and said: "Wait Lakshmana. *Look at the beauty of his language.* Look at the pronunciation and expression of that great scholar. He is speaking a faultless language. Look at the command over his language. I cannot see even a single flaw in the usage of his words."



Hanuman was very well aware as to where to put a comma or a full stop, where to increase or decrease the voice (modulation), the sequence of words to be spoken etc.,

In spite of being God Himself, Rama was surprised with the language of Hanuman. Hanuman could speak so well for he is none other than incarnation of Shiva.

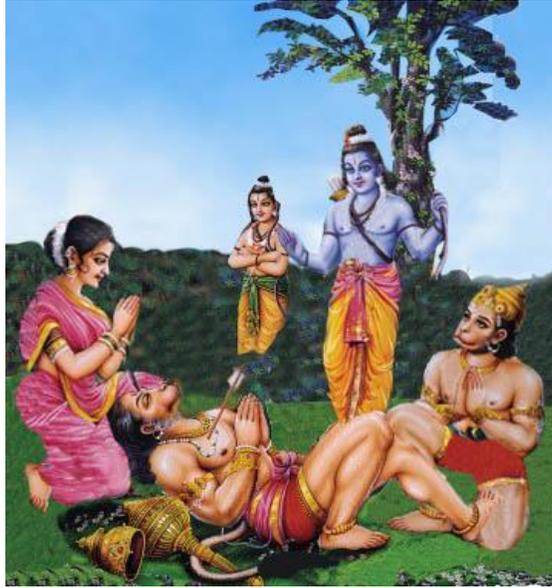
Hanuman the obedient son



Hanuman's Mother Anjana devi advised him:

“Don't meddle in the fight between your uncles ie., Vali and Sugreeva because Vali has anger and Sugreeva has lust.” Hanuman was a disciple of Sun God. When he wanted to *offer his Guru Dakshina*, Sun God asked Hanuman to *help Sugriva*, his son, in his future hardships. Therefore he became the minister of Sugriva to fulfill his promise made to his Guru, Sun God. Still he followed his Mother's advice by not engaging in a face to face combat against Vali while supporting Sugriva.

Hanuman, the foremost among the wise



Vali on his deathbed abused Rama for attacking him from back. Rama did not react but listened to all his abuses patiently. After Vali finished his talk, Rama answered peacefully each and every question of Vali without any anger and convinced him. However when Tara came down and started abusing them in uncontrollable tears, Rama kept quiet. He did not understand how to console her.

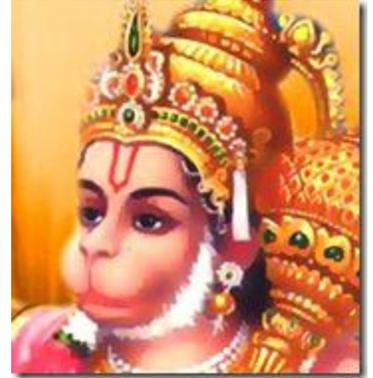


Hanuman showed his wisdom here. He said, "Vali was not righteous hence Rama slayed him down. If you desire, Angadha can be made the King." On listening to these words, Tara's grief came down. Then Anjaneya said, "As Angadha is still young, he can be made the yuvaraja (heir to the king) and Sugriva be coronated as the king." Tara agreed to this.

Thus *Hanuman is foremost among the wise.*

Monkeys may behave like Monkeys but Men should not behave like Monkeys

When Sugriva forgot his promise made to Rama and indulged in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, Hanuman told him: "Sugriva, never leave the dharma (righteousness), yoga, karma and bhakti."



Thus Hanuman reminded Sugriva of his duty.



Even an incarnation gets reaction when he takes a human form. Sugriva promised that he would conduct the search for Sita after the completion of rainy season. However in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, he forgot his promise. Then Rama told Lakshmana to go to Sugriva and tell him: "The doors (of death) through

which Vali has been sent have not be closed and are still open for you."

Lakshmana came to Sugriva in utter rage and spoke thus: "Rama fulfilled his promise made to you by killing Vali. But you are failing in your promise to find Mother Sita. You have left the virtue of friendship. Currently you are intoxicated with wine. Beware! you will be sent to the same place where Vali has been sent ie., even you will be killed."



Then Vali's wife Tara interferred and replied:

"Sugriva has the tendency of enjoying pleasures. Till now Sugriva has been roaming in the mountains being afraid of his brother Vali. Therefore he never had the chance of enjoying pleasures and has got the opportunity only now.

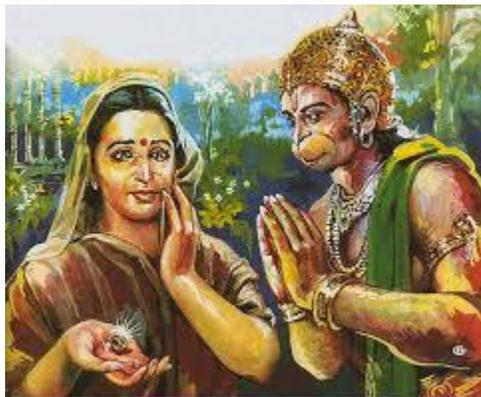
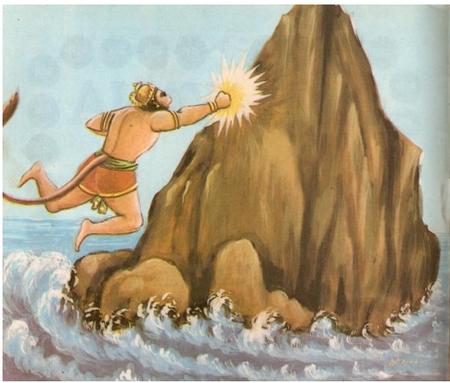
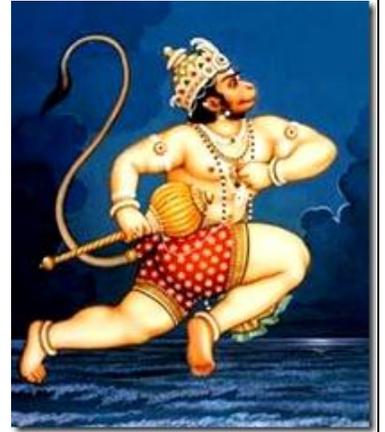
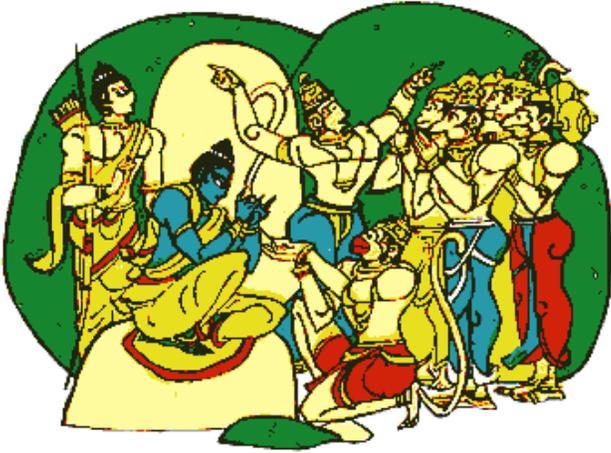
Hence now he is intoxicated with pleasures. We are monkeys and hence possess a wavering mind. But you belong to the great dynasty of Raghu. You possess this great quality: Even if anyone helps



others, you consider that help being done to you. It is true that Sugriva has committed a mistake in forgetting his promise made to Rama. *But it is a even more grave mistake when men behave like monkeys and not when monkeys behave like monkeys.*" In other words Tara meant:

“Lakshmana! Sugriva has not transcended his lust and you have not transcended your anger. So what is the difference between you and Sugriva?” As the fire cools down on sprinkling water, even Lakshmana's anger cooled down with the words of Tara. Hence Tara is considered as one of the greatest Jnanis .

Abstracts from Sundara Kanda



**Hanuman, the most beautiful one and the
embodiment of Humility**



If you want any of your desire to be fulfilled, read Sundara Kanda. The Sundara (Beauty) Kanda has been named after the Most Beautiful one who is none other than Hanuman. Not just 2 eyes but even 1000 eyes are not enough to view his *beauty*.



No one has spread the name of Rama as Hanuman has done. He never had any personal work of his own. He was always involved in the work of Rama. He is a 100% Selfless man. If we at least understand the birth and behaviour of Hanuman, all our tasks will be accomplished and we will be liberated.

Even though Hanuman possessed the power equivalent to that of Rama, he always considered himself to be servant of Rama.

Thus Hanuman is an embodiment of *humility*.

The Qualities of Hanuman



Hanuman can be described thus:

- a) A Man of character (gunavanta)
- b) A Man of right behavior (buddhimanta)
- c) A Man of discrimination (vivekavanta)
- d) A Man of good qualities
- e) A Man of great intellect (Medhavi)



- f) A great visionary
- g) The Most Powerful one (Ati Balavan)
- h) A Great scholar
- i) One who is eligible of being honored by us.
- j) The bestower of physical and mental strength
- k) The embodiment of all the gods
- l) The personification of Purity
- m) The eternal celibate

Sita resembled the sun on the day of Solar eclipse



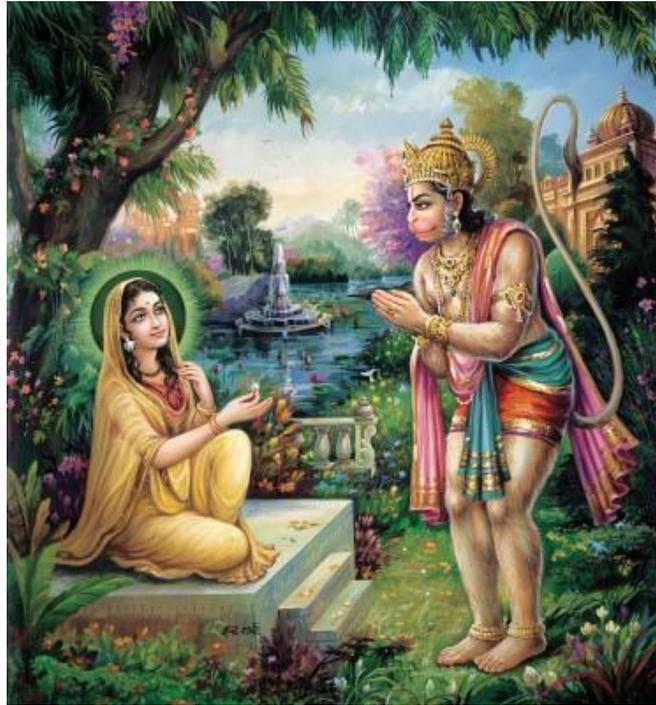
When Hanuman saw Sita for the first time in Lanka, Valmiki described the state of Sita.

Valmiki said that Sita resembled the following:

1) A river devoid of water 2) The sun on the day of solar eclipse 3) A money lender who is unable to collect his money 4) The face of a famous personality forbearing ill fame 5) The face of a worshipper when his worship is interrupted.

It is inevitable to cry when one loses a wife like

Sita



Even Hanuman was mistaken. Once He saw Rama crying for Sita and thought: "How is it that even an incarnation cries for the sake of wife?" When Hanuman saw Sita for the first time in Lanka, Hanuman felt: "It is all my monkey mindedness. *It is inevitable even for an incarnation to cry when he loses a wife like Sita.* It is a mistake in my thought process."

The Essence of Hindu Religion

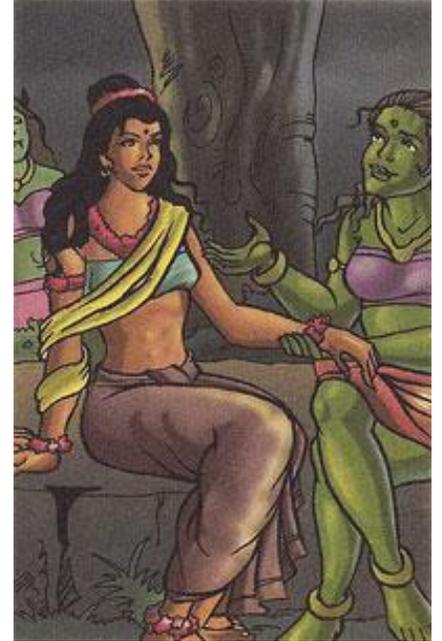


Ravana Pestering Sita. Notice the Symbolic Protection of Rama Nama Around Her

When Ravana approached Sita on a daily basis and said: "Why do you still crave for Rama. Love me and Marry me." Sita replied: "As per the tradition, I am already married to Rama. Leave about the question whether Rama is God or not; Leave about the question whether Rama is good or not. *How can I become your wife when I am already the wife of another?*" The entire essence of Hindu religion exists in this sentence.

Coming events cast their shadow before

Vibhishana's daughter Trijata got a dream in the early hours of a morning. She viewed Rama and Lakshmana being seated on a white elephant and Ravana being slayed down. *'Coming events cast their shadow before.'*



Trijata narrated the above dream to the demons torturing Sita and further said:" Rama and Sita are inseparable. As we cannot separate the sun from the sunlight, the Moon from the moonlight, Rama cannot be separated from Sita." Initially the demons threatened Sita that they would eat her away if she did not marry Ravana. After listening to Trijata's dream, they reduced their torture.

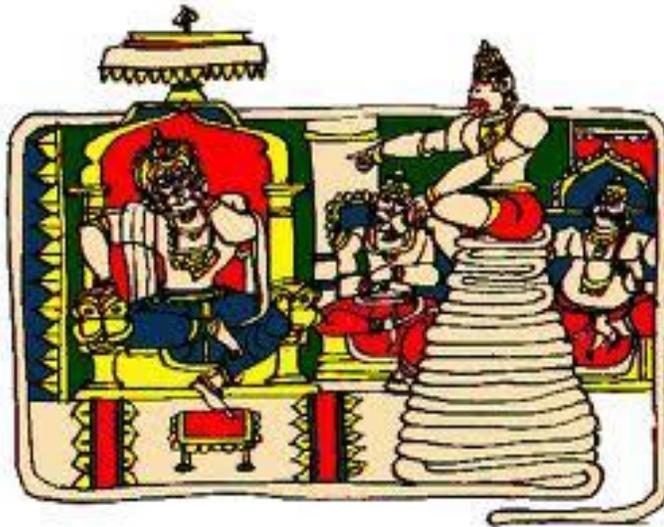
Rama seems to be courageous. Now it is your turn to display patience.



Hanuman Gives the "Beautiful" Ring to Sita J.

While leaving Lanka, Hanuman tells Sita: "Mother! What Rama currently needs is courage and what you currently need is patience. Rama seems to be courageous. Therefore now it is your turn to display patience. If you have the slightest of the doubt whether Rama can come here and kill Ravana to release you, then it indicates that you still doubt the Power of Rama."

Nothing is too heavy for destiny



Hanuman reminded Ravana: “Though you may possess a boon for not being killed by anyone, the boon does not include men and monkeys. Hence if you fight with Rama, your death is inevitable.”

Still Ravana did not listen to Hanuman and thereby destroyed himself as well as his kingdom Lanka.

Valmiki said: "*Nothing is too heavy for destiny.*" Even the greatest of the kingdoms get washed away in the course of destiny. The elephants will be converted to ants due to destiny.

'Witnessed Sita' and not 'I have witnessed Sita'



On returning back from Lanka after successfully tracing the details of Sita, Hanuman told Rama:

"Witnessed Sita". Hanuman did not say: "Sita has been found or witnessed". It was because after listening to the word Sita and before listening to the word witnessed, Rama would get anxious.

Hence the great scholar Hanuman uttered:

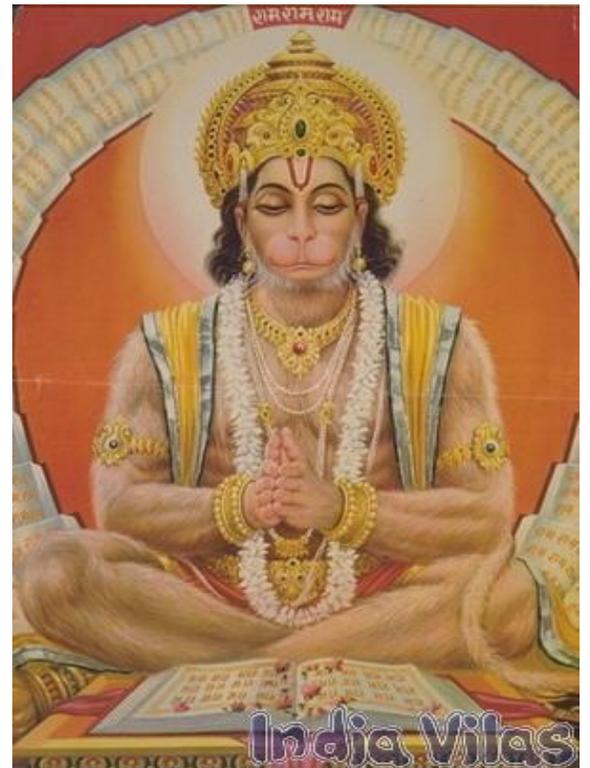
" *Witnessed Sita*".

Quotes of Hanuman



"You need not disturb Sri Rama to fulfill your worldly desires. If you want liberation alone, you approach the Lord, else you can approach me."

"Pray the Lord for the sake of Lord, Love Him for the sake of Love and possess devotion towards Him for the sake of devotion."





As long as you possess body consciousness, be subservient to Rama and perform his work. When you consider your spouse itself as your Master, isn't Rama, the Lord of the Universe, your Master? When you give so much importance to the words of the one who earns and feeds you, cant you give importance to the words of the omnipotent, omniscient and the Lord of the Universe?"



"Oh! Rama, When I have body consciousness and consider myself to be body, I am your servant. When I identify myself with Jiva ie mind, I am a part of you. When I experience the Supreme Self, there is no difference between You and Me."



"The name of Rama is much greater than the form of Rama. In this dark age (Kaliyuga), one need not perform either penance or sacrifice. It is enough if one chants the name of Rama. No other effort is required."

Hanuman, an antidote for Planet Saturn



Once the planet Saturn tried to catch Hanuman (to create misfortune for him). Hanuman did not speak out anything. He simply caught the planet Saturn with his tail and threw him far. Unable to tolerate the strength of Hanuman's tail, the planet Saturn prayed Hanuman to release him. He said: "Hanuman, I approached you only out of my foolishness. I promise that I will never approach you. Not only you, I promise that I will not even approach your devotees. Hence release me." Therefore the tradition states that the people who have become victims of the planet Saturn should worship Hanuman. They should visit the temple of Hanuman on a tuesday or a Saturday after the sunset and pray Him. This would *remove the ill-effects of planet Saturn.*

Be Subservient as Hanuman



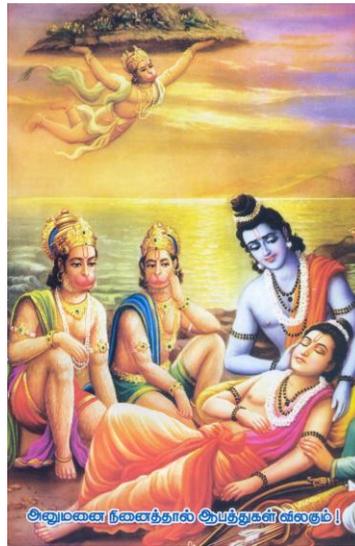
As long as we possess body bound 'i' ie body mindedness, we should *be subservient to God as Hanuman was subservient to Rama.*

Hanuman never did his own work. Rama's work was his own work.

He never possessed his own will. Rama's will was his own. We will be reformed if we try to be like Hanuman.

If we possess the body bound 'i' and proclaim ourselves to be Rama, it is of no use, we will only be degraded.

Abstracts from Yuddha Kanda



Even Men are enchanted by the beauty of Rama



Ravana was advised by one of his ministers to take the form of Rama to delude Sita and thereby fulfill his lust. Ravana then replied: "Leave about disguising as Rama; All my lust would vanish away by a mere thought of Rama. Then how can I enjoy Sita?"

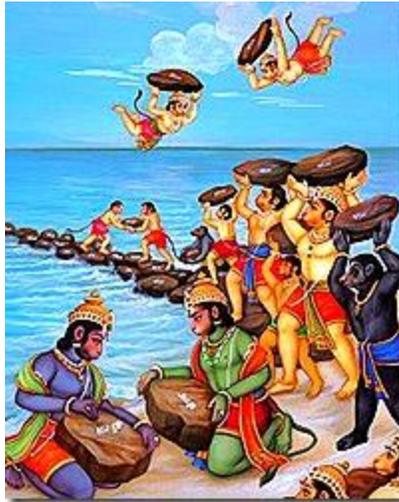
Even men are enchanted by the beauty of Rama.

Even an incarnation accepts the limitations of body and mind



Rama is most powerful. He doesn't require anybody's help. But while building the bridge towards Lanka, everyone served Him in their own capacity. As per the custom of the world, Rama accepted all their service. The body and mind possess certain limitations. *As Rama took up a body, He stayed within its limitations in spite of being the Supreme Lord.*

How can the stone remain from being drowned when it has left Rama's hand?



A Bridge was built by the army of Rama in order to cross the sea and reach Lanka. When the monkeys threw stones into the sea after chanting the name of Rama, the stones floated. However when Rama threw a stone along with the monkeys, the stone drowned. When everyone was surprised, Hanuman said: *"How can the stone remain from being drowned when it has left Rama's hand?"* This bridge was named as Adams bridge by the Britishers and exists even now within the sea.

One can sacrifice one's blood relations also for the sake of righteousness



When Vibhishana failed in all his attempts to convince Ravana to hand over Sita, he left Ravana and came into the refuge of Rama. Everyone advised Rama not to accept Vibhishana since he is

the brother of Ravana. However Hanuman told Rama: "I observed Vibhishana's behaviour in Lanka. He is a very good and righteous man. You can trust Vibhishana." Since Rama possessed an oath of giving refuge to anyone who surrenders unto Him, he accepted Vibhishana.

Even Vibhishana is our Guru.

He preached us that *one can sacrifice his (evil minded) blood relations also for the sake righteousness.*

Rama would fulfill his promise in any condition



Rama said: "After the death of Ravana, Let's give his kingdom to his brother Vibhishana. Lanka belongs to the demons, so let's hand it over to one among them ie Vibhishana."

Speaking further, Rama told Vibhishana: "Kubera gave the kingdom of Lanka to Ravana and it is the same that I hand over to you. I am unable to give nothing from my end." Rama regretted saying thus.



However there were some worldly people who said: "Rama don't make promises in haste. You never swerve from your promise. You always cling to single word, single wife and single arrow.

Ravana is not yet killed. How can you announce Vibhishana as the King of Lanka? What will you do if Ravana asks for pardon and surrenders Sita?" Rama said:" *I will give away the kingdom of Ayodhya to Vibhishana and fulfill my promise.*"

Rama, A True Friend



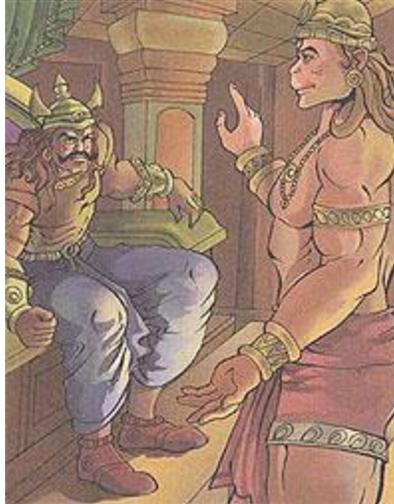
Once Vibhishana showed Ravana to Rama and his companions. On seeing Ravana, Sugriva was overcome by anger. He hastily flew towards

Ravana and attacked him. But Ravana fought back and almost killed Sugriva. However Rama protected Sugriva and saved his life.

When Sugriva returned with grave injuries, Rama said: "Oh! Sugriva, What have you done? Is Ravana an ordinary demon that you can kill him so easily? *What shall I do with Sita after losing you?"*

Rama was a true friend.

Rama's Compassion for the innocent people



Rama said: "Why should the people of Lanka, who did not commit any mistake suffer for the misdeeds of Ravana?" Rama felt that even the *innocent people of Lanka would be killed if there is a war.*

Therefore He sent Angadha, the son of Vali as the messenger to Ravana with a message that the war and thereby the killing of innocent people can be prevented if he returns back Sita.

But Ravana did not accept.

Ravana acted like a dog in stealing Sita



Kumbhakarna was the brother of Ravana. Ravana invited him to participate in the war against Rama. Then Kumbhakarna said:

"Brother, Ravana! You have committed a grave mistake. You already possess several wives and I don't require a wife (for he slept for 6 months). Then why did you crave for the wife of Rama? *You acted like a dog in stealing Sita.* You proved to be a coward. Did you kill Rama and Lakshmana before bringing Sita? Had you fought bravely, there existed a possibility that Sita might have loved you. Neither yourself nor myself can defeat Rama. Friendship or enmity should be made only with the equals. Since we originated from the same Mother, I will fight for you and die along with you."

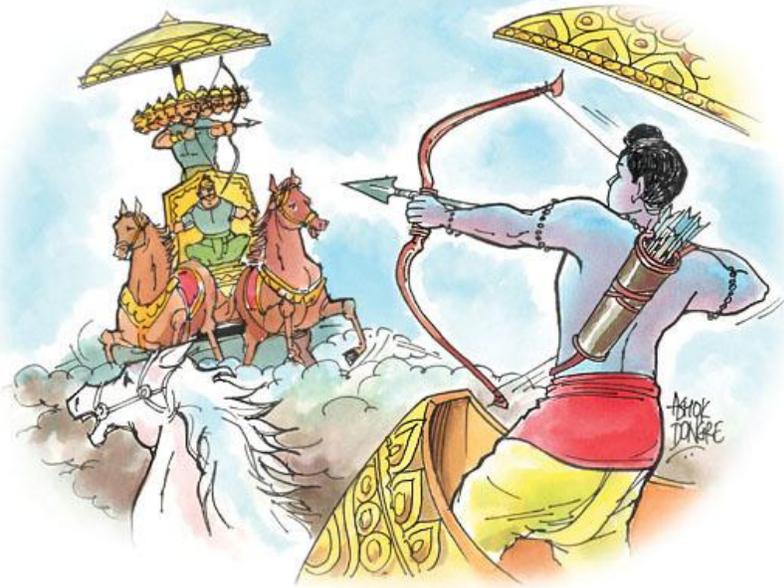
The Supreme Lord gets angry only at the suffering of his devotees

Rama never got angry. He only enacted anger. Rama was not within the control of anger but anger was



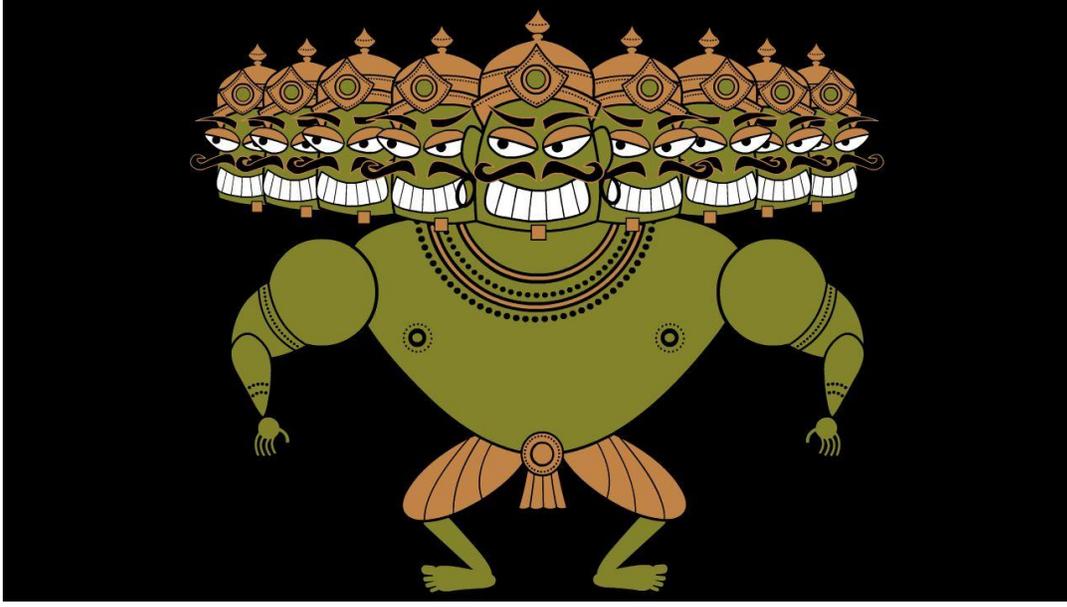
within the control of Rama. However there was only one instance where Rama did not enact anger but got angry. Sri Rama was fighting from the ground while Ravana was fighting from a chariot. Hence Hanuman carried Rama on his shoulders. Hanuman moved quickly and ensured that all the arrows of Ravana targeted towards Rama missed their target. Out of rage, Ravana started targeting Hanuman. Hanuman's body became red, with blood oozing out. *Here, Rama did not enact anger but became angry. Hence the Supreme Lord gets angry only at the suffering of his devotees.*

Rama, the Gentleman God



If anyone wants to describe the war between Rama and Ravana, they would say: "The war between Rama and Ravana resemble the war between Rama and Ravana." ie their war is incomparable with any other war. When all the demons were killed in the war, Ravana had to enter the battlefield.

Rama at first killed the horses, then the driver of chariot of Ravana. He also completely disarmed



and badly injured Ravana. Now Ravana was totally tired and helpless. The entire glory of Rama lies here. Rama told Ravana: "Your horses as well as driver have been killed. You are totally disarmed, completely tired and severely injured. Therefore go back home for today, take bath, cure your injuries, take your food, sleep for the night and come back tomorrow with new weapons for I can't kill a weaponless man."

Hence Rama is called *Maryada Purushottama*. No other God attained this name.



When Ravana died, Vibhishana refused to conduct the funeral rites. But Rama said," Ravana may not possess a good character. But still he is a king and also your brother. You will be fulfilling your duty if you conduct his funeral rites. If you still hesitate to perform funeral rites, I will perform the same." Vibhishana then agreed accordingly. Therefore Rama enabled the performance of funeral rites of his enemy.

Hence he is called Maryada Purushottama ie
The Gentleman GOD.

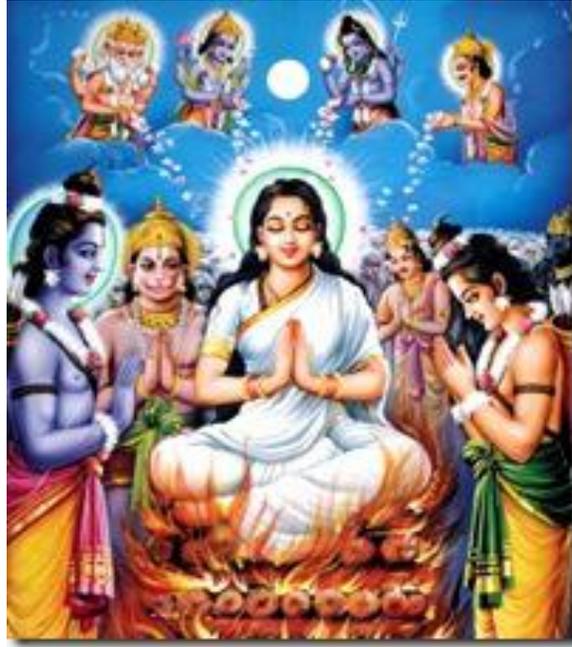
To err is human and to forgive is Divine



When Hanuman wanted to punish and kill the demons who tortured Sita, She said: "They only did their duty as instructed by their Master. Anyways if we start punishing each and everyone who commits mistake, can we see at least one person left over on this earth?"

To err is human. Hence forgive them."

**Jiva is not burnt in the fire of Jnana(Knowledge)
but attains complete purification**



After the death of Ravana, Rama wanted Sita to undergo the test of entering fire in order to prove her chastity to the world. Sita successfully entered the fire and came back unhurt. The fire god handed over Sita to Rama calling her to be personification of purity. Similarly *the Jiva is not burnt in the fire of Jnana (Knowledge) but attains complete purification*. The Jiva becomes as pure as Brahman and remains inseparable from Brahman.

Rama's renunciation



Rama is an embodiment of renunciation. After completing 14yrs of stay in forests, Rama came back. Rama instructed Hanuman to do the following: "Go to Bharata and give him the news of my arrival. Observe his facial expressions. If he is happy, I will proceed, else I will return back to forests." Bharata felt relieved on hearing the news of Rama's arrival into Ayodhya. Rama accepted the kingdom from Bharata.

Rama gave Himself to Hanuman



At the time of Coronation as the King of Ayodhya, Rama called each and everyone who helped him by their name and honored them with gifts. Rama couldn't find any suitable gift for Hanuman. Therefore He came near Hanuman and hugged Him and thereby *gifted Himself*.

Rama exists within the Heart of Hanuman



Mother Sita gifted Hanuman with a beautiful pearl necklace after returning to Ayodhya. Hanuman started biting the necklace and threw away each and every pearl after intensely looking into them. When Sita asked him for his mysterious behaviour, Hanuman said: "I am trying to see if Rama is visible in any of the pearls." Sita replied: "Why do search Rama in the pearls when He is very much within you?" Then Hanuman opened his Heart (with piercing nails) and showed *Sita and Rama within His Heart* to everyone.

Abstracts from Uttara Kanda



Each of our thought is answerable



Rama got a message that a resident of Ayodhya abused him for having accepted Sita in spite of her stay in Lanka for almost an year. When none of the people in Ayodhya resisted this abuse, Rama decided to sacrifice Sita. Hence He called Lakshmana and asked him to leave Sita into forests, though she was pregnant. Lakshmana did not want to carry on Rama's order. Though Lakshmana

understood it to be God's will, he could not stop thinking thus: "Had I been elder to Rama, I would have never abided by this order. It is only because I am younger than Rama that I have to carry on this order. If ever I am reborn again, I shouldn't take birth as the younger one."

Lakshmana did not utter this aloud. He only thought it within himself. Accordingly in the next birth Lakshmana was reborn as Balarama(the elder one) and Rama reincarnated as Sri Krishna (the younger one). There were many instances where Balarama did not listen to Krishna.



We need to be careful even with regard to our thoughts as *we are answerable to each and every thought of ours.*

Self Realization is possible only when Self chooses us and reveals itself.



Once Lava and Kusha captured Hanuman. Lava and Kusha were proud of their achievement. Looking at this Hanuman laughed within himself. Hanuman is the incarnation of Lord

Shiva. How can these children capture Him? Hanuman told the children: "You did not capture me. It is only because I wanted to be captured that you could do so." Similarly we cannot attain Self realization only by our effort.

Self Realization is possible only when Self chooses us and reveals itself.

Rama Rajya is Surajya ie The ruling of Rama is ideal forever



If anyone committed mistake in the kingdom of Rama or if there were any unseasonal rains or if any children passed away before their parents, Rama thought: "There is some flaw within me or in my administration. Else how can my people commit any mistake?"



Rama always spoke righteously. He never spoke any unpleasant Truth. If anyone steals anything, he would not call them a thief publicly rather he would get rid of their tendency of stealing. Though Rama ruled the kingdom, he ruled it in such a manner that the people of Ayodhya never got the feeling of being ruled by Rama.

Gandhiji said: "It is not enough if we get Swarajya. What we need is *RamaRajya or Surajya.*"

The Three Great Jnanis in Ramayana

In Ramayana, *Sumithra* (the Mother of Lakshmana), *Tara* (the wife of Vali) and *Mandodari* (the wife of Ravana) are considered to be great Jnanis. Tara and Mandodari possessed good heart and good discriminating faculty. They also preached the good. If anyone did not listen to them, they would not be bothered. They just did their duty in telling them the righteous path. It was only their destiny in not getting a righteous husband.

Sumithra implies the friend of all (ie for both the good as well as the bad people). Sumithra (the mother of Lakshmana) is a great Jnani. She is not visible on the screen but she is equivalent to Maharishis like Ramakrishna and Ramana. Kaushalya and Kaikeyi were not of that standard.

Kaikeyi got spoilt listening to the words of her maid servant Manthara. When Rama started for the forests, Kaushalya asked him to ignore the words of Dasaratha. Lakshmana strengthened her words. However it was only Sumithra who did not try to stop Rama. She remained calm.

She thought:" Whatever is to happen will happen." She knew the purpose of Rama's advent onto this earth.

She put both of her sons in the service of their brothers. Lakshmana was sent to serve Rama and Shatrugna was sent to serve Bharata.



When there is a bad karma awaiting us, we will not listen to the good as told by others. Mandodari said: "Rama is not an ordinary man. He is Vishnu Himself. Oh! Ravana, you are not only

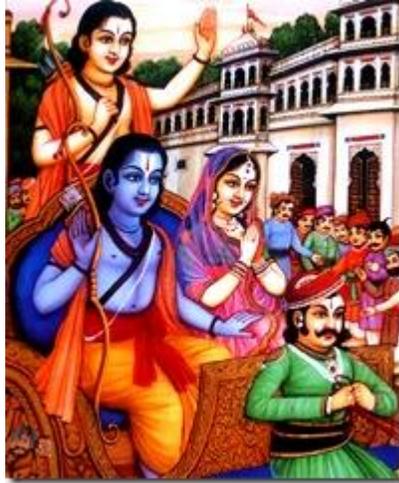
destroying yourselves but destroying the entire Lanka. Didn't you get anyone in Lanka who is as beautiful as Sita? You didnot bring Sita to Lanka. But you brought your death to Lanka." However Ravana never cared her words.



Tara mourning Vali's death

Tara had a lot of common sense. She told Vali: 'Being defeated yesterday, why should Sugriva invite you for a war today? Sugriva has made friendship with some people. Don't go for a fight today.' Tara understood that Sugriva has some other force behind him which inspired him for an immediate second fight.

Ramayana, the Story of Sacrifice



Rama was asked why he practiced such an austere life and did not enjoy pleasures when His mother Kaikeyi did not impose such strict restrictions in forest life. Rama replied: "When my brother Lakshmana cannot enjoy, How can I think of any pleasures? Kaikeyi did not say that Lakshmana has to leave Ayodhya. Still he came to the forests only to serve me. How can I enjoy any pleasures in front of my brother who sacrificed all his pleasures only for my sake?"

Thus *Ramayana is full of sacrifice.*

'Practicing virtue' is the Essence of Ramayana



Sita said: "True Happiness (Bliss) can be attained only on *practicing righteousness* (dharma) and not by enjoying pleasures."

This is the essence of Ramayana.

The True Beauty exists within



All the beauty lies within the Heart. Beauty doesn't exist in external things. Once I had the vision of Anjaneya swami in a dream when I was in Shirdi. Previously I neither had His vision in a dream nor did I ever adore him before. Leave out the god or devil. Unable to view the beauty, I closed both my eyes. When I say beauty, I am talking about the external beauty. I am not referring to Inner Beauty.

Hence the name Sundara Kanda emerged thus. Anjaneya Swamy is most beautiful. Therefore the name itself became Sundara Kanda. When he came in my dream in Shirdi, I felt: “Can anyone with body possess such beauty?” I tried to view with both the eyes. Ultimately unable to view that beauty, I closed both my eyes. Whenever Shakespeare referred to any beautiful people, he described them: 'The Beauty walks on the Earth.' It implies the Beauty itself took a form and started walking on this earth. I felt even Shakespeare can't describe the beauty of Anjaneya swami. I felt I can never visualize the Inner beauty of Anjaneya Swami as I closed my eyes on merely viewing His external beauty. I felt, How wonderful should be His Inner Beauty!

The True Beauty exists within.

- Sadguru Sri Nannagaru

