

4. The Search For Sita

For three days, the pandits who spoke here have been discoursing on the *Ramayana*. This is understandable in the case of a specialist like Dheekshith, but even the other wise person turned away from his usual topics and spoke on the *Ramayana*. Of course, the *Ramayana* is a limitless ocean, from which any number of canals can be dug and water drawn. I was wondering whether at least today someone will refer to Krishna Principle (*Thathwam*)! Not that one gets tired of the Rama Principle. The Reality of the Lord is ever fresh.

Every life is a new chance, a fresh opportunity for realising the Truth. Yesterday is gone; today is the fresh chance, the new opportunity; tomorrow you cannot be sure of. Every minute is to be welcomed as unique and as valuable —precious, in fact. Do not pine over the chunks of time you have wasted. Instead, seize the moment that has come within your grasp.

Search for the Lord as Hanuman searched for Sita. He had not seen her; he had only heard her being described. He could also judge what she should be like, since Rama could aspire for her so deeply. It was like the attachment of Purusha (The Primal Entity, God) for *prakriti* (nature), no less. Like Hanuman, people should also seek the incomprehensible primal energy (*adisakthi*) among the multifarious counter-attractions and distractions of Lanka.

Through righteousness and action man can attain salvation

Since the Entity (Purusha, the Primal Energy) is not known, one has to discover it by means of the characteristics it is supposed to have. The experience of sages is the only guide, the only map, the only chart. That chart is supplied by the *Bhagavatham*, the *Ramayana*, the *Puranas*. Have the universal mother (*loka-matha*), the *Tripurasundari*, in your heart, Her lineaments clear and pure. Then proceed bravely into the land of demons and you will succeed. Saturate yourself in the search; establish yourself in the faith; then, you can fill yourself with the bliss.

Who can describe the signs of the Sita you seek to find? Only Rama can, for He is the master. Take Him as the truest guide. The *Vedas* are like that. Lakshmana, Sugriva, and the rest are as the scriptures (*sastras*), arguing by deduction, not from actual mastery. They did not describe Sita —they could not, for they had not seen.

When Rama went to the hermitages at Chitrakoota, the sages, saints, and *vedic* scholars, all gathered round Him, and their gratitude at getting His *darshan* (site of a holy person) was as a garland of flowers on His breast, flowers of many hues, but all strung on a strand of deep devotion. They knew that Rama was both the Seen and the Unseen, that He had come to establish righteousness (*dharma*) and *karma*, for through *dharma*, as well as *karma* done along the lines of *dharma*, one is certain to attain peace and salvation. The *Avatars* insist on *dharma*. It is declared that the purpose of the *Avatar* is the establishment of virtue, but what is *dharma* for, if not for liberation from the bondage of ignorance?

Every step of the Avatar is predetermined

The plane has to land at certain places in order to take in those who have won the right to fly by the tickets they have purchased. So too, the Lord has to come down so that those who have won the right to be liberated may be saved. Incidentally, others too will know of the Lord, of His grace and ways of winning it, of the joy of libera-

tion. Some deny even today the possibility of air travel; they curse the contrivance; they cavil at it. Similarly, there are many who cavil at the *Avatar* that has come to save.

Dheekshith spoke of Kabanda, who swore at Rama and wanted to eat Him up alive, but Rama liberated him from his curse and restored him to previous glory. If you condemn the *Brahmin* and the *Vedas*, you drift afar from Me; if you desist, you are drawn near.

Parasurama, the inveterate foe of the *Kshatriyas*, appeared before Rama when Rama was returning to Ayodhya after the marriage. He was blazing like fire, terrible to behold, for he had heard the twang of Siva's bow when Rama broke it in two. He challenged him to draw the bow of his father and to meet him in single combat. But Rama said, "You are worthy of respect; you are a *Brahmin* and you are related to Viswamitra."

Every step in the career of the *Avatar* is predetermined. Rama knew that the coming of Surpanakha was the prelude to the coming of Ravana; He had asked Sita to enter the fire and remain in it as just as an outer manifestation. Even before the human manifestation, the Lord had decided that the *Sakthi* (Energy) must also accompany Him, because Ravana's penance was so strong that only some major sin could make the blessings he had won from the gods null and void. The ordeal of fire through which Sita was asked to prove herself was not an ordeal at all; it was arranged only to recover Sita from the fire in which she had taken shelter, in preparation for the Lanka episode. That is the way of the *Avatar*; it will not go about announcing its nature; it will announce itself by deeds.

Do you yearn for the Lord's mercy and grace?

Jatayu recognised Rama's Divinity; he said, "Rama! I am content; this body has realised the acme of joy. I have seen you and have been touched by you. I have spoken to you and imbibed your voice." Only Rama knows the significance of each step of His and the character of the next step. He carves His own career.

You were told that Rama showed man how to bear suffering, while Krishna taught him how to overcome it. No, Rama was all bliss (*ananda*) inside, though he outwardly lamented for Sita. Divine Reality is known only to Rama. What can the rest know?. At best, they can have but a glimpse of Rama's grace —and even that only if they are immersed in intense inner prayer for God.

Think of Him, call out to Him, and He melts. Whatever form He may be shining in, that intensity will make you recognise Him. He may be a cowherd boy standing under a tree, with a flute at his lips. You will see him and adore Him and place Him in your heart. You extol the Lord as love, mercy, grace, but do you yearn to earn them? Do you believe you can win them? Do you strive to treasure them?

Have an idea of the place of your last journey

Take the example of Surpanakha, Ravana's sister. She was mutilated by Lakshmana, rejected by Rama, and ridiculed by Sita —humiliated beyond cure. She fled in terror to her brother, and what did she ask him to do? She described Rama's heavenly charm, His divine grace, and advised her brother to fill his heart with the sweetness that Rama exhaled all around Him! Rama came to feed the roots of truth and righteousness (*sathya* and *dharma*), so Sita joined Him through correct orthodox rites. There was no abduction of Sita.

In the Krishna *Avatara*, the task was to foster peace and love (*santhi* and *prema*). Now, all four (peace, love, truth, righteousness) are in danger of being dried up. The *dharma* that has fled to the forests has to be led back into the villages and towns. The absence of *dharma* that has ruined the villages and towns has to be driven to the

jungle. You will have no rest until this is done. For it is your problem, the problem in which each of you is vitally involved.

Now, you are unaware of the problem, the problem of liberation. Once, a courtier for a king was so idle and ease-loving that whenever the king ordered him to see someone, he raised flimsy objections like, “Perhaps, he is away,” “If he does not greet me, what shall I do?” “What if he gets wild?” “I may not be able to return in time.” etc., etc. So the king got the word “Fool” embroidered on a broad tape and commanded him to wear it on his brow so that all may learn a lesson. The courtier became the laughing stock of the palace.

Within a few months, the king was on his death bed, and the courtiers vied with one another in weeping over him. When the fool came near, the king told him with tears in his eyes, “I am leaving on my last journey, dear fool.”

The fool said, “Wait, I’ll bring the royal elephant.”

The king shook his head and said, “Elephants will not take me there.”

The fool pleaded that the king might use the chariot, but when told that chariots would also be of no avail, he suggested the royal steed as the alternative. Even that was of no help, he was told. Then the fool innocently asked the king. “To what strange place are you traveling?”

The king replied. “I don’t know.”

At this, the fool untied the tape from his brow and tied it on the brow of the dying king. “You deserve this more; you know you are going, but you don’t know where! You know that elephants, horses, and chariots don’t go there, but you don’t know where it is or how it looks!” he said.

But you can have some idea of that place if you evaluate your deeds and thoughts now, in this life.

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