

49. The four brothers

RAAMA is a Name sweeter than all the sweet things in Nature, when imbibed alone or together. It can never cloy on the tongue or the mind. It has mysterious mystic potentialities to elevate man. So, one must endeavour, to keep the mind ever dwelling on it. The story of Raama---The .Raamaayana---is but another version of the *Vedhas* (ancient sacred revealed scriptures). In fact, it is said that the *Vedhas* incarnated as the Raamaayana, in order to help the destruction of evil and the revival of righteous living, tasks which the Lord took upon Himself during His career as Raama. Why! Raama and his three brothers are, from one point of view, the four *Vedhas* in human form. The Yajur Vedha lays down the rights and duties of man, the *Dharma* (righteousness) which ensures peace and prosperity for him, both here and hereafter. So, it is represented by Raama Himself. He put on the vesture of manhood in order to establish and exemplify *Dharma*. "*Raamah Vighrahavaan Dharmah*" is how the Raamaayana describes Him---Raama, the embodied *Dharma*.

Mankind should follow Raama's life

Rig Vedha enshrines *manthras* (potent sacred formulae). It elucidates them and elaborates their meanings, with the *manthra* "Raama" as their crown. Brother Lakshmana, who repeated it, recited it and relied on it, for everything in life and beyond, is indeed the embodiment of the *Rig Vedha*. He teaches mankind that the *Raama manthra* confers on man the Constant Presence of the Lord. The same *Vedha* contains songs in praise of Creation and the Creator and through adoration sublimated into song, the Lord yields Grace. Bharatha whose every thought, word and deed was an act of thanksgiving, a paen of praise dedicated to Raama, was the *Saama Vedha* itself.

Then, we have the *Atharvana Vedha* which is a collection of medical and ritual details, of charms and protective amulets to overcome internal and external foes. Shathrughna, whose very name means 'the destroyer of foes is therefore appropriately the *avathaar* (incarnation) of the *Atharvana Vedha*. This *Vedha* enables man to conquer evil habits, attitudes and tendencies, so that he can listen to the Voice of God and gladly translate the words into daily life. Shathrughna demonstrated by his humility, loyalty and devotion the victory he had won over his ego, greed and anger.

Very often the mistake is committed, of forgetting that Raama came, in order to lay down the norms of life and that His life has to be observed and followed by mankind. He is the ideal Man, with qualities and virtues which every man can earn to elevate himself. Mere worship, empty adoration is not what the *Avathaar* expects.

Raama underwent trouble, disappointment and distress like any man, in order to show that joy was but an interval between two griefs, that grief was but a challenge, a rest, a lesson. He held forth the ideal relationship between son and father, husband and wife, brother and brother, friend and friend, ally and enemy and even man and beast. The Raamaayana teaches also that, as a consequence of the individual's accumulated *karma-consequence*, children of the same mother may have opposite characters and careers. The waters of a pond breed leeches, as well as lotuses. Vaali and Sugreeva were brothers! So were Raavana and Vibheeshana!

Four brothers represent four Purusharthas

From another point of view, Raama and the brothers can be understood as models of the four primal goals of Man, the *Purusharthas*. Of these Raama was *Dharma* (Righteousness); Lakshmana was *Artha* (prosperity); Bharatha was *Kaama* (fulfilment of desires) and Shathrughna was *moksha* (liberation). These four are the progeny of every human being. Dhasharatha (Ten-chariot leader) is Man, having five sense organs of perception and five senses of action, ruling over *Ayodhya*, the city that is impregnable (the heart wherein God resides). These four goals have to be reduced to two pairs --- *dharma-artha* and *kaama-moksha*. Man must struggle to attain prosperity only through righteous ways. The prosperity should be used to achieve and *maintain dharma*. This is the reason why Lakshmana follows in the footsteps of Raama and when Kabandha held Lakshmana in his deadly clasp, Lakshmana offered to stay in those arms, advising Raama to escape and live. This is the reason why when Lakshmana fell unconscious on the battlefield and could not be revived. Raama lamented, "Perhaps I may get another Seetha, if this Seetha passes away; but O Lakshmana, nowhere can I get another brother like you.

Raama's expression of His fraternal love

Raama also shared with Bharatha the love that Lakshmana poured on him so profusely. He told Bharatha who prayed to him, with tears in his eyes, to return to Ayodhya as its ruler, "No, Father has ordered Me to rule over the forests, helping and saving/he anchorites and hermits from the inroads of demonic hordes. He has willed that you should rule over the Kingdom of Ayodhya. Let us both be loyal to him." That was the expression of His fraternal love.

The second pair of *Purusharthas* is *Kaama* and *Moksha*; the only desire worth entertaining and pursuing is the desire for liberation. Bharatha had it and Shathrughna shared it.

After the long pilgrimage to the shrines and holy spots of Bhaaratha, Raama had a few years, until he was aged fourteen, of apparent introspection and solitude. He disliked food and regal apparel. He was not interested in materials and men. He waved his fingers and palms for no clear reason; he wrote on the air only He knew what. He laughed without reason. In short, His actions and movements were exactly the same as when I was in my early teens. Vashishtha attempted to bring His mind back to normalcy, but that was only a stage which all *Avathaars* are in, before they enter upon the task for which they have come down. Those years, the *Avathaar* was designing His Master Plan. At the end of that period, the sage Vishwaamithra arrived at the palace, asking Dhasharatha to send Raama (and the inseparable Lakshmana) with him, to save the hermits from the demonic gang who desecrated *Vedhic* rites. The plan started unfolding.

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The Vedhas say, Maathru devo bhava. Revere your Mother as God. This applies to the country which gave birth to you, also. So, you must revere the country and follow its culture.

You must also revere your mother, who has brought you up with love, care and sacrifice. However famous a man may be, if he does not revere his mother, he does not deserve respect.

A person whose heart is so hard that it does not melt at the pleadings of the mother deserves nothing but ridicule.

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