

4. Lakshmana, The Devoted Brother Of Rama

Even if one can repeat word by word the contents of the Vedas and the Vedangas, even if one has the capacity to compose attractive poems, if he has no purity of mind, he is sure to be ruined. What other greater truth can I convey to you?

Pavitratma Swarupas:

If one wants to live a life of an animal in this world, it is not necessary for him to learn how to control his senses. But for man, to live like a human being, it is very necessary to learn self-control. Just as when the horses are attached to a chariot or a car-riage, the driver has to use the reins to control the horses so that the carriage does not go the wrong way; so also man, to go the right way, has to control his senses by using the discriminating power and his ability to know the right from the wrong as the reins in his hand.

Animals like cattle and birds cannot change the qualities which they acquire with their birth. The lion, for instance, is born as a cruel animal. It lives and dies as a cruel animal. The cat is born with the quality of trapping the rats and of killing them. It lives with these qualities. Try as they may, these animals cannot change their bad and cruel qualities. You can make a cat sit on the chair and give it *sathwik* food like milk, curd and so on, and try to convert the cat, but the moment it sees a rat, it jumps to kill the rat. Thus, the animal, which is born with cruel qualities, cannot change in spite of our best efforts. However, man is not like that.

Man may be born with cruel qualities; but such a person, by contact with good people, by living with good people, in a good environment, can change his qualities. It is in this context that it has been said that of all the living things that are born of a mother's womb, to have a human birth is the most difficult thing. Even if bad qualities come to man by birth there are ample opportunities for him to get rid of such bad qualities by contact with good people. But by good fortune, Lakshmana is one who had good qualities by birth; and he so controlled his senses that he had acquired further good qualities. He was a person of good conduct and good thoughts and was always ready to obey Rama's orders. He was Sumitra's son. From his very birth, during his childhood, he never knew separation from Rama. Lakshmana was such that during the first two days after his birth, he was not taking food and was crying for the sake of Rama. Sumitra, the mother and Dasaratha, the father, wanted to know what was the reason for this incessant crying of Lakshmana. Dasaratha and Sumitra were trying to give him various kinds of medical attention. They tried many *tantras*, *manthras* and *yantras*; but in spite of all that, Lakshmana's crying did not diminish at all.

When this news was conveyed to Vasishta, the *Guru*, he thought for a moment and tried to understand the situation by his divine vision. He saw that the cause for this situation was the physical separation of Rama and Lakshmana, and he advised that they both be made to sleep in the same cradle.

Thus, when Sumitra took Lakshmana to the mansion of Kausalya and put him in the same cradle where Rama was sleeping, Lakshmana not only stopped crying, but also began to take food and began to enjoy the bliss of the company of Rama. To Lakshmana, separation from Rama was as

distressing and troublesome as the joining with Rama was blissful.

From that day, Lakshmana was following Rama as if he was Rama's shadow. Lakshmana could not sleep for a moment when Rama was not present. Lakshmana would not eat if Rama was not present. Wherever he went, he was always following Rama, as if he was Rama's shadow. Devotion to Rama was so intense in Lakshmana that he filled his heart with a feeling that everything that was present belonged in reality to Rama.

When Rama was banished to the forest, Kaikeyi asked for two boons. The first one was, Bharatha her son should become the king, and the second was that Rama should go to the forest and live there as a *sanyasi* for fourteen years. There was no place for Lakshmana in these two desires of Kaikeyi. But when Rama was preparing for the journey, Lakshmana also accompanied Rama. He also wore clothes of bark in the same manner. Looking at the kind of clothes Rama was wearing to go to the forest and the kind of appearance that Rama had, Lakshmana also decided that he should wear similar clothes and have a similar appearance.

For all the fourteen years in the forest, Lakshmana conducted himself, as if he was one with Rama. He was spending all his energy and time in taking care of and serving Rama and Sita. Truly, if Lakshmana was not present, how would Rama and Sita have spent their lives? This important role of Lakshmana was beautifully described by Tulsidas in his narration of the *Ramayana*. Tulsidas described that when Rama was returning victoriously to Ayodhya with his flag flying high, the people of Ayodhya were reverentially saluting the flag and the pole on which the flag was flying. This description

of Tulsidas has a significant inner meaning. The pole here signifies Lakshmana. The pole is as important as the flag. In fact, if the pole did not exist, the flag cannot fly at all. Thus Lakshmana became the steadfast support for Sita and Rama. In this story of *Ramayana*, while the Lord in human form was playing the role of Rama, Lakshmana had also a very important role to play. The entire life of Lakshmana was devoted to obeying the orders of Rama. However, on two occasions, knowing that what he was doing was wrong, Lakshmana had to disobey the orders of Rama. The first occasion relates to the incident when Maricha appeared as a deer and when Maricha was being pursued by Rama, they heard the voices of Maricha asking for Lakshmana's help and calling to Sita. What were the orders Rama gave on this occasion? Lakshmana was to remain and protect Sita. On that occasion, Sita spoke very harsh words and she even threatened by saying that if Lakshmana would not go, she would commit suicide by burning herself.

On that occasion, listening to the harsh words of Sita, Lakshmana felt that if he would not leave Sita and go, some harm may come to her. In order that Sita may not harm herself, he disobeyed Rama's orders for the first time.

The second occasion: a difficult situation arose when Sita was in the family-way in an advanced stage. It became necessary for him to take Sita into the forest. He did not like to do this and yet he took her into the forest. This he did just for obeying Rama's orders. Again, on the occasion when Sita returned from Lanka and when she was preparing to jump into the fire to prove her innocence, Lakshmana was asked to prepare the fire. Although Lakshmana did not like to do this, he did prepare the firewood for the test, just for obeying the

orders of Rama. Whatever difficult situation it may be, he always followed the orders of Rama.

Another occasion when he had to disobey the orders of Rama was towards the end of Rama's mortal life. Rudra, the God of Time, came to meet Rama. Before he started conversation, he said that no one else should enter the room while they were conversing. So Rama called Lakshmana and asked him to stand at the entrance and see that no one disturbed them. Rama realised that this was a difficult task, and that only Lakshmana could do it effectively. At this time, when Lakshmana was standing guard, Durvasa came and wanted to enter the room. Lakshmana, who was under orders to keep out visitors, told Durvasa in great humility that as Rama was in conversation with someone else, he should wait for a while. Durvasa, however, became very angry and threatened to destroy Rama, Lakshmana, and, indeed, the whole city of Ayodhya in a moment. Lakshmana then thought it better to let Durvasa into the room rather than invoke his anger and get the entire city into trouble. In this manner, Lakshmana spent all his life in the service of Rama and rarely disobeyed the orders of Rama; and even when he did disobey, it was only for the sake of others. All the work that he did was for the good of others.

During the battle against Ravana, the fight between Lakshmana and Indrajit lasted for three full days, after which, finally, Indrajit was killed. Rama came and embraced Lakshmana and said that he was as happy as he would be when he found Sita. In the entire battle, the most difficult thing was to defeat Indrajit. In fact, it was easier to kill Ravana. When Rama saw that Lakshmana was victorious, he was overjoyed.

To others like Vibhishana, Rama frequently stated that it is very difficult to find a brother like Lakshmana. He has

been telling Sugriva and others, that the task which he has completed could be so handled only because of the presence of Lakshmana, and that he, by himself, could not have done it. If today, we want to understand the kind of relationship that should exist between brothers, we should take the example of Lakshmana from *Ramayana*. However, these days, the inimical attitude between brothers is indeed very bad. One brother cannot bear the pros-perity of the other brother; they become jealous of each other and go to the extent of even killing each other. The sacred and good qualities of Lakshmana are beyond description.

During all the years of his service to Sita and Rama, he was sitting at their feet and did not even look closely at Sita's face. When Sita was being carried away by Ravana over the Chitrakoota Mountain, she dropped several of her jewels so that people could find them and convey the news to Rama. When Rama and Lakshmana became friendly with Sugriva, he brought the jewels, which his followers had gathered and showed them to Rama. At that time Rama asked Lakshmana if he could recognise the jewels. Lakshmana said that while he cannot recognise the other jewels, he can certainly recognise those which Sita wore on her feet. When Rama asked how he could recognise these, he said that every morning he used to go and touch her feet; hence he was quite familiar with them.

Lakshmana was looking at the wife of his brother as his own mother and was looking only at her feet. He never looked at her face. Lakshmana would always bend his head low if he found some other woman coming in front of him. Lakshmana was a person of exemplary character. The vision and the eyes of the young people today do not bend even if we bend them by force. If they use their vision for unsacred purposes, the disturbance of the mind will surely follow. The first important

sadhana is to control our vision. Lakshmana had such sacred thought and mind. If only he is taken as an ideal example and we follow him, there will be no doubt of our own elevation.

There is another example. On one night, when matters of state were being discussed, there was delay; and Lakshmana was returning home rather late. At the mansion of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna were all alone and by mistake Lakshmana walked into Rama's palace. When he saw Sita sleeping, he realised his mistake and quickly rushed out and fell at *Guru* Vasishtha's feet and prayed to him so that he could tell him how this mistake can be corrected and atoned for.

Lakshmana had a pure heart by which he could consider entering a room where his brother's wife was sleeping as the greatest sin which one could commit. Such ideals, at the present time, would not be seen even as rare examples. If the brother goes out on camp, the younger brother will be taking out his sister-in-law to the cinema. Lakshmana was a great individual who followed a code of conduct which would set an example to others. Although Lakshmana had a spark of divinity in him, this could come out and be seen only in the divine presence of Rama. At all other times, when he was alone, he was like an ordinary person, in fact weaker than an ordinary person.

Here is a small example. There is a stone from which you can produce fire. Even if such a stone is kept under water for a long time, it can produce fire when it comes into contact with another such stone. In the same manner, divine strength which is present in Lakshmana and Hanuman blossomed forth only when they came together or when they were in the company of Rama.

When Indrajit and Lakshmana were fighting; Lakshmana fell into a swoon. Indrajit tried his best to carry away Lakshmana to Lanka. Although Indrajit had all the strength, he could not move Lakshmana even a little. Hanuman entered the scene and was uttering the name of Rama. By hearing the name of Rama, Lakshmana became so alive that Lakshmana could be carried on the shoulders of Hanuman to the camp of Rama. Lakshmana was one who had such an attachment to the name of Rama that if Rama's name was mentioned, Lakshmana's strength would reappear.

Lakshmana used to display his strength only in the presence of human beings or *rakshasas*, but would never display even a fraction of his strength in the presence of Rama. Lakshmana had such noble and good qualities.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

During these few days, we have recognised and understood the great qualities of Rama from the story of *Ramayana*. We have also seen Rama's ideals as examples for ourselves; and it is only when we have understood this that our lives can become good.