

6

The Ideal Brothers

*Saravarupa Dharam Shantham Sarva nama
Dharam Shivam Satchidanandam Advaitam
Sathyam Shivam Sundaram*

*All the names and forms are but the manifestations of
the Supreme Being who is the embodiment of Peace
and Auspiciousness. He is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss
Absolute and non-dual. He is Sathyam, Sivam,
Sundaram (Truth, Goodness, Beauty).*

(Sanskrit Verse)

THE strength and capacities of the Divine are beyond comprehension; yet, without understanding this, criticism of Divinity is rife. One may praise, another may deride, but Divinity remains the same. Neither will criticism diminish Divinity, nor will praise enhance it. The traits of ebbing and rising are that of **this** world. Divinity is unaffected

by both. Those who hanker after name and fame can never comprehend Divinity. Thousands of students have passed out of this university, having acquired a totally free education. We have not published or advertised this fact. I derive my joy from their joy and remain contented.

Dedication of Rama's Brothers

Yesterday we had seen that Bharatha did not go into Ayodhya with Rama's sandals. He instead built a small ashram at Nandigrama and remained there, worshipping Rama's sandals. His wife Mandavi too spent her time contemplating on Rama's name and thus gave support to her husband. Rama and Sita spent their time roving in the forest. Lakshmana was totally dedicated to their service. But little is said about Shatrughna. None of the texts mentions much about him. Intellectuals are thriving in thousands. People with a power to enquire are also many. Sadly, there are very few who tend to enquire into the intricate and delicate spiritual matters.

From the times of Dasaratha, Sumantra remained the chief minister of the kingdom. He was very loyal to Dasaratha and implicitly obeyed him. In such a situation, the legal heir, Rama was in the forest. His representative Bharatha was on a self-imposed exile at Nandigrama. So, who was handling the day-to-day administration of Ayodhya? It is here that we must probe deeply. From

dawn to dusk it was Shatrughna who stayed in Ayodhya, enquired into the problems of the citizens and governed the kingdom. By night he would faithfully report everything to Bharatha. Shatrughna carried out every aspect of administration of the kingdom without causing the least trouble to Bharatha. Though he did so much, his name appears scarcely in literature.

Both the sons of Sumitra always engaged themselves in serving their elder brothers and fostering unity among themselves. They never went after name and fame. Shatrughna dedicated himself totally to Bharatha and executed all his commands. He was highly intelligent, able and powerful. Sadly, such a noble character has not been deeply enquired into. For the fourteen long years, it was Shatrughna who held the reins of the kingdom in his able hands. However, he would never disturb Bharatha even if he had any doubts. The reason was that he felt he would be responsible for disturbing Bharatha's concentration as he was in constant meditation of Rama.

Sumitra had already made a promise to the other queens, "Kausalya! Your son may become the king. My son Lakshmana will become his personal aide. Kaikeyi! Bharatha also may become king. I shall then send Shatrughna to serve him. Both my sons were born to serve and not to earn name, fame or kingdoms." How noble were the two brothers Lakshmana and

Shatrughna! Without them, both Rama and Bharatha would not have achieved their fame and glory. They always stood by their elder brothers giving them solid support. This cooperation caused the brothers to remain very dear to each other.

At the time of the battle, when Lakshmana fainted, Rama lamented thus, “If I search, I may find a wife like Sita; I may find a mother like Kausalya; but a brother like Lakshmana can never be found.” Rama was ready to give up anything for the sake of Lakshmana. At that time, he instructed Hanuman to go and bring the *Sanjeevani* plant. Hanuman was one who always obeyed Rama’s command. He always moved as one amongst the brothers. He promptly left, but unable to identify the plant, uprooted the entire mountain and carried it to Lanka. As he was flying over Ayodhya, Bharatha spotted him. Bharatha was getting regular reports from the forest that the demons were troubling Rama. So he suspected this huge figure to be a Rakshasa who intended serious harm to Rama. He took out his bow and shot at Hanuman. Hanuman alighted along with the mountain. Paying his respects to Bharatha, he said, “Oh! King! Lakshmana has fainted on the battlefield. I am taking this mountain containing the Sanjeevani herb to revive him. I don’t know where the herb is on this mountain. Hence, in order to carry out Rama’s command, I am taking away the entire mountain.”

Ideal Spouses for Ideal Brothers

Bharatha was ecstatic at this news. He sent word for mother Kausalya and said, “Mother! This messenger has news about Rama.” He then introduced Hanuman to her who went on to tell her in detail all the news of the battlefield. “There is a fierce battle going on between Rama and Ravana. It shall definitely be over in a day or two. Lakshmana has fainted and these herbs are meant to revive him.” Sumitra too was asked to come by Bharatha. She did not express any anxiety at the news about Lakshmana. On the contrary she said, “ I am never worried about my sons’ welfare. My only concern is that Rama is being put to inconvenience. If my son Lakshmana were to die, I shall definitely send my other son Shatrughna to serve Rama. My only aim is to see Rama happy. It is with this intention that I had sent Lakshmana to the forest with Rama.” Hanuman then was taken to Lakshmana’s wife, Urmila. She had spent the entire fourteen years painting the pictures of Sita and Rama. Bharatha approached her and broke the news. He said, “Lakshmana’s life is in danger. I am at a loss for words and don’t know what to do.”

When Bharatha broke the news to her, Urmila did not show a trace of fear or worry. She said, “My husband’s heart is filled with the name of Rama. Therefore, he is perhaps sleeping peacefully. All the pain and suffering must be Rama’s alone. No danger can

befall my husband. He will always remain safe.” What we need to recognize here is that, the wives of the four brothers were as virtuous and noble as their husbands. The happiness and prosperity of the husbands depended on the noble qualities of their wives. The good conduct and good actions of the wives were also responsible. Their character gave their husbands tremendous support.

After the news was conveyed, Hanuman quickly continued his journey to the battlefield. What we need to know here is that, while as the four brothers spread their ideals to the world, their wives too did not lag behind in doing the same. As her husband Shatrughna ruled the kingdom, Shrutakeerti lent admirable support to him, just as Mandavi stood by Bharatha. They never aspired for anything else. Except at the time of dawn and dusk when they would go to mother Kausalya for her blessings, they never had any other commitments. The good influence of such noble characters can be felt throughout the *Ramayana*.

Ayodhya saw peace, prosperity and security aplenty. Truth was spoken and righteousness was adhered to, in every corner of the country. Shatrughna’s able rule assured this. He would not sleep or rest at all, anticipating some problem or other. He used to worry that any lapse in his administration would bring a bad name for Bharatha. Shatrughna was extremely cautious

to see that Bharatha’s name was not tainted due to any mistakes of his. He looked after the kingdom with care and concern. He always followed Rama’s command. Shatrughna ruled Ayodhya with such noble feelings. Bharatha did not play an active role in the administration of the kingdom. He would merely nod and accede to anything that Shatrughna proposed. What was the reason for this implicit trust? Bharatha knew Shatrughna’s selfless love. He also knew that Shatrughna was very capable and would never allow any enemy to venture into the territory of Ayodhya. True to his name, Shatrughna could destroy any such enemy. This led to lasting peace in Ayodhya. The principles followed by the ancient Indians were, Speak the Truth, Follow Righteousness (*Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara*) and pray for the safety of the world. They also laid emphasis on unity amongst the brothers. None must face disrepute. Everyone must live his life with virtue and good name.

Though Shatrughna ruled the kingdom on behalf of Bharatha, he could never summon courage to advise his elder brother. He never talked back to his elders. When you are replying to elders, you must think carefully and answer. It is a grave mistake to talk to them as you like. Such actions may even lead to some unpleasant situations. Truth must be spoken. Righteousness must be adhered to. Brothers and sisters must live as a closely-knit unit, with understanding among themselves.

In this way, Bharatha and Shatrughna spent their time in Ayodhya and Nandigrama, waiting for the return of Rama.

Shrutakeerti is another character in the *Ramayana* who is extremely noble. She always tried to lighten the burden of her husband Shatrughna by giving him suitable advice. She would never utter words that could harm others. ‘Shruta+Keerti’, as the name suggests, would always listen to good only. In turn, she would always speak what was good and conveyed that which was pleasant and pleasing to the ear. She would encourage only what was good and beneficial to others. Dasaratha’s daughters-in-law were real gems.

However, in our story, only Rama and Sita are depicted as the lead characters. Not much importance is given to the other roles in the epic. If Lakshmana, Shatrughna, Urmila, Mandavi and Shrutakeerti were not there, the glory of Rama and Sita could not have been highlighted. Rama could not live even a minute without Lakshmana by his side. He would not eat without Lakshmana giving him company. Rama hence demonstrated the ideal of unity and coexistence to the world. In the Vedas, there is a *sloka* that aptly describes this idealism.

Saha Na Vavathu

Saha Nau Bhunakthu

Saha Veeryam Karavavahai

Tejaswi Navadheethamasthu

Ma Vidvisavahai

*(Let us all move together, let us all grow together,
Let us all stay united and share our knowledge,
Let us live together with friendship and without
disharmony.)*

The four brothers displayed such a unity amongst themselves. Today, if there are four children in the house, they take to four different directions.

Encounter with Khara and Dooshana

In those days, Kings used to appoint special messengers to keep them informed about the happenings in and around the kingdom. Once, a message was conveyed to Bharatha relating the enormous trouble that the demons were causing to Rama. A particular mention was made of the terrible duo Khara and Dooshana. They were close associates of the demon king Ravana. They attempted to secretly harm Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Bharatha was informed of these developments. It was Soorpanakha who poisoned the ears of Khara and Dooshana and goaded them to attack the brothers. Bharatha was hence anxiously awaiting further news about Rama from his messengers. He was also hesitant to approach the elders with this news. Such news was generally conveyed only to

Sumitra. She was a great lady. She would always use soft words and advise aptly. Therefore, she was relied upon. Bharatha conveyed this news to Sumitra and sought her advice. He did not mention this to his own mother Kaikeyi. At this moment of Bharatha's anxiety, Sumitra consoled Bharatha and said, "Rama will not come to any harm. He is Divinity incarnate. Therefore, do not give scope for any worries." She advised Bharatha thus.

Khara and Dooshana brought a forty thousand strong army to fight against Rama. In the meanwhile, Rama had instructed Lakshmana to take Sita into a cave and remain there while he destroyed Khara's army.

Sage Vishwamitra had given to Rama all the mighty weapons he had acquired. Rama discharged one such powerful arrow from his bow. That one arrow multiplied into hundred arrows, the hundred became thousand and the thousand in turn became forty thousand arrows and annihilated the Rakshasa army in a trice. Demigods from heaven hailed the victory of Rama and showered flower petals on him. When this news reached Ayodhya, Bharata, Shatrughna and the mothers were overjoyed.

Panchavati

When Rama, Lakshmana and Sita reached the hermitage of Sage Agastya, he also offered him all the weapons that were at his disposal. Moreover, he advised Rama thus: "O Ramachandra! Being a householder, it is

not possible for you to stay in my hermitage. There is a place called "Panchavati" in Dandaka forest which is a suitable place for you to stay during your exile."

Accordingly, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana stayed in Panchavati and spent their time peacefully. It was here that the demoness Soorpanakha tried to make friendship with Rama and Lakshmana. She was attracted by their charming personality. She assumed the form of a beautiful lady and approached Rama with a request to marry her. Rama said, "No doubt, you are beautiful. Even my wife Sita is no match for you. But what can I do? I am already married and my wife is with me. So, it is better that you marry Lakshmana whose wife is not here at present." When she expressed her desire to Lakshmana, he said, "Rama is my master and I am his servant. If you marry me, you will have to spend your entire life in the service of mother Sita. So, it is better that you marry Rama himself."

In this manner, Rama and Lakshmana were having fun. After some time, Soorpanakha became enraged. She thought, "It is because of the presence of Sita that Rama is not interested in me. If she is not there, Rama will certainly yield to my request." With such a feeling she made an attempt to swallow Sita. Immediately, Rama signalled to Lakshmana. He, being highly intelligent, understood its implication and cut the nose and ears of Soorpanakha. He spared her life as he did not want to kill a woman.

Soorpanakha ran wailing to her brother Ravana in Lanka. She was bleeding from her wounds and lamented to Ravana, “Brother! There are two princes who are the sons of emperor Dasaratha. They are responsible for my sorry state.” Ravana had a very pertinent question to ask her. He said, “Sister! Your nose and ears are separate entities on your face. Both could not have been cut off at the same time. How is it that you did not escape after your nose was mutilated? Why did you remain standing till your ears were also cut off?” Soorpanakha replied, “Brother! I cannot explain this. The moment Lakshmana touched me; I was lost in a trance. Their handsome and regal bearing enraptured me. It was as if I lost all my consciousness and remained rooted to the spot.” In this way, she kept eulogizing the two princes’ noble bearing and virtues.

There are several such incidents and descriptions in the epic *Ramayana*. Today, we have seen what an important role Shatrughna played in ably administrating Ayodhya for fourteen long years. Bharatha was the ruler representative only in name. The groundwork was carried out entirely by Shatrughna. He alone was responsible for keeping the boundaries of Ayodhya safe. During the fourteen years, not even a single enemy dared to march on Ayodhya. There was no unrest amongst the civilians. Initially, there were fears about an Ayodhya without a king. Rama advised Bharatha regarding the duties of a ruler. He said, “Bharatha, you

are now the king. Our father was a mighty emperor who ruled his kingdom well. After his death, it is your responsibility now. Do not answer back to anyone. Never use harsh words to hurt anyone. Always carry out pleasant conversations. There must be no agitation in our kingdom.” Both Bharatha and Shatrughna received the advice and followed it faithfully.

Extend Help without Publicity

Today Mariwala has spoken extensively about the achievements of our hospital. I always advise my students not to publicise what we do in the hospital. There are several wonderful things that are happening. One patient from Nepal had his heart on his right side! Our doctors have shifted it back to the correct location. The surgery was understandably highly complicated. Still it was carried out. I told my students that no one needed to be informed about this. People may accuse us of praising ourselves. I told them that their main task was to make everyone happy. Today, Mariwala has narrated so many incidents that he had never briefed Me about. These boys from the hospital sleep on the ground floor while I stay on the first floor. They always discuss only hospital related matters. I keep telling them, “Do not speak about them anywhere outside. You do your duty sincerely. Extend every possible comfort to those who come.” The other day I was informed that a particular injection was to be administered to a patient in

order to save his life. That injection costs Rs. 80,000! Mariwala came and asked me whether they could go ahead and buy such an expensive injection. I replied that to save a life, any amount should be spent. I shall bear the expenses, but get the medicine and save his life. Instantly we dispatched a courier to Bangalore and obtained the required injection. There are several such expensive medicines that need to be used in the hospital. No one knows about these details. I believe that, we must not look at the cost if it can save a life. I tell our doctors to continue with their duty and keep the patients healthy and safe. The patients should not be subjected to any kind of inconvenience.

Summer Course, Brindavan, 20-05-2002

