

## THE CORONATION

**A**s soon as they entered the Palace, Vasishta, the Royal Preceptor, announced the date when the Coronation of Rama as the Emperor of Ayodhya would be celebrated, giving details of the auspicious attributes of the Day which had persuaded him to choose it for the great event. He invited also all the Pundits and Priests to take part in the ceremonies that the Vedas had enjoined, to consummate the Coronation. They appreciated the decision of Vasishta, for, they said, “a Coronation so celebrated would confer peace and prosperity on all mankind.”

Vasishta called Sumanthra into his presence and addressed him thus, “Assemble the armed forces—cavalry, elephantry, chariotry and infantry—at the City, for the Coronation of Rama is to be celebrated.” Those words filled Sumanthra with extreme delight. He arranged for the

presence of the Army with all its components. The elephants, horses and chariots were decorated grandly for the occasion. They were posted in serried ranks outside the City Gate. The horsemen and the foot soldiers wore colourful uniforms and they stood at attention, ready to march into the City for the festival. Messengers were sent in all directions to gather, in time, the various auspicious articles necessary for the rituals that formed part of the celebrations. The entire City was agog with joy. Citizens vied with each other in decorating their houses and streets. People felt their two eyes were not enough to imbibe the charm of the City.

Rama was especially considerate towards the persons who had accompanied him from beyond Ayodhya—Sugriva, Vibhishana, Angada, Nala, Nila and others. He ordered that proper arrangements be made for accommodating them and for looking after their needs. Accordingly, servants from the Palace rushed to perfect the arrangements designed for the comfort of the guests. Rama called Bharatha and with his own hands, he combed his hair that had become matted, since he had not paid any attention to it, for years. The three brothers personally poured holy water and attended on Bharatha while he bathed. Then, Rama received the assent of Vasishta to disentangle his own matted hair and had his auspicious bath. The queen mothers meanwhile had Sita go through her bath also. The mothers carefully combed her matted hair too, and dressed her in yellow silk. They made her wear jewels

in plenty. She shone like Goddess Lakshmi. She moved to where Rama was and took her seat to the left of her Lord.

The three mothers experienced the highest bliss, looking on, while Rama and Sita were seated together. “Is not this day the luckiest day for us? This day, our lives have achieved fulfilment. This day, our dearest wish has come true. This day, our eyes have had their purpose realised,” they said to themselves. They lost all consciousness of their bodies or surroundings, watching Rama and Sita, and taking them to be the God Narayana and the Divine Consort of Narayana, Lakshmi. Vasishta the great Sage was moved by the splendour that shone in the face of Rama. He was delighted beyond measure at the divine effulgence of the Rama Form. “I achieved today the goal for which I have been waiting so long, he felt, and he ruminated on that joy and remained blissful and silent. He called the servitors and instructed them to bring the Great Throne and install it in the Coronation Hall. It was a Throne set with multifarious gemstone which shone like the sun, with dazzling brilliance.

Rama prostrated before Vasishta and other sages, and fell at the feet of the queen mothers. Then, he prostrated before the entire assembly of elders and citizens and ascended the Throne, with Sita following him close. The vast gathering rejoiced at the unique sight, so full of majesty and glory. The Rishis, the elders, the leading citizens and the saintly well-wishers were filled with gratefulness and joy. The Brahmins recited appropriate Vedic hymns. The

populace shouted Jai Jai, so loud and so often that the sky threatened to fall. It was the seventh day of the dark half of the moon in the month of Vaisakh. Taking the permission of the assembly and the assent of the Brahmins, Vasishta wound round the brow of Rama the insignia of Imperial Authority.

Kausalya, the mother of Rama, turned her eyes on Rama every now and then, and felt supremely happy. What can be said of the joy of the brothers Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna! It was beyond words. They were holding whisks and the umbrella, and standing behind the throne, as attendants on Rama. In fact, they were all through the years doing penance for the culmination they were enjoying that day! The gods beat drums of victory in the sky. The celestial musicians sang hallelujahs, the celestial dancers danced in joy. Vibhishana, Sugriva, Angada, Hanuman, Jambavan, Nala, Nila, Dadhimukha, Divida, Mainda—these heroes bore bows and arrows, scimitars, spears and stood on both sides of the throne, in reverential humility.

With Sita sitting on his left, Rama manifested the beauty of a billion Manmathas (Manmatha—the God of Love) rolled into one. The gods were fascinated by the divine charm of the Lord of the Raghu line. Rama wore silk, interwoven with gold, and he had pendants on his ears brilliant with precious gems. He wore ornaments on his ankles and wrists, which derived beauty from his entrancing charm. The three worlds exulted at the sublimity of the event and the personal grandeur of Rama. Really those who

witnessed that scene were the fortunate ones among the living.

Vibhishana came forward with a dazzling necklace of gems, which the Lord of the Sea had offered to Ravana. Sita accepted it. Its brilliance shone all over the vast Hall and struck everyone as a unique string of gems. But with the necklace in her hand, she cast a questioning glance at the face of Rama. Rama knew what was passing in her mind. He said, "Sita! You can grant it as a gift to anyone among those here who deserves your grace." Sita thought just for a second and looked at Hanuman. Becoming aware of the compassion in the look, Hanuman approached her in great humility and stood before Sita with bowed head. The necklace was given by Sita to Hanuman. Hanuman turned it around many times in his hand, its dazzle enrapturing everyone in that vast assembly. He was struggling to discover its specialness, with unslaked curiosity. He plucked every gem, put it between his teeth, and placed it adjacent to his ear, and with a face indicating disappointment, he threw the gem away in disgust! All eyes were watching with increasing amazement this peculiar behaviour. They were stunned into silence and inactivity. Until he treated the last gem in the same cavalier manner, no one dared interrupt or condemn. They could only protest in whispers among themselves! "Who is this monkey that treats the diamond necklace so lovingly and so compassionately presented to him by Sita?" was the question on most lips.

Even Vibhishana was sad that Hanuman had so brazenly insulted the priceless jewel that he had brought. "He has pulled it to pieces and cast the gems aside," he told himself. Everyone in the Hall surmised the reason for this strange behaviour in his own way. At last, one vassal Ruler could not restrain himself. He rose and gave vent to his resentment: "Peerless Hero! Why did you break that necklace of gems into so many bits? Was it right to do so? Tell us the reason why? Give us some explanation and remove our doubts."

Hanuman listened to him patiently and replied. "Oh King! I examined each gem in order to discover whether each had in it the sacred Name of Rama. I could not find it in any gem. Without that Name of Rama, they are but stones and pebbles. So, I cast them on the ground." The ruler was not silenced by this. He asked, "Hanuman! If it is your desire that in every article and particle there should be the Name of Rama, are you not asking for something impossible?" Hanuman replied. "Of what good, of what profit, is anything which has not in it the Name of Rama? I have no need of such." The valiant hero, Hanuman, dismissed the argument of the ruler thus. The ruler, however continued his objections. He said, "You would not wear anything that has not got in it the Name of Rama. Well, you are wearing your body. You are carrying it about with you. Prove to us that you have the Name in it." Hanuman laughed aloud. He said, "I shall prove, see!" He pulled a single hair from off his forearm and held it very near the ear of the Ruler. He

could hear the Name, Rama, Rama, Rama uttered by the single hair! At this, he was overcome with a sense of wonder. He fell at the feet of Hanuman and prayed for pardon.

Rama called Hanuman near himself and warmly embraced him. He asked him, “Hanuman! What can I offer you on this occasion? I have no gift worthy to be given to you. I am giving you myself as my gift to you.” Then, he offered his body to be clasped by Hanuman’s hands. The assembly was moved into shouts of Jai at this unique act of Grace. They praised Hanuman and declared that there was no one to equal him in all the worlds. They praised the devotion and dedication of Hanuman.

Then, Rama rose from the Throne and moved out into the open, where vast congregations were awaiting His appearance. He gave them the Divine Darsan of His charming majestic Form. They were all thrilled as never before in the bliss the Darsan conferred. All who were in the City were provided festive reception and given lavish food and luxurious shelter. Rama arranged for the distribution, as charity, of gold and money, of vehicles, household utensils and clothing, of houses and other amenities in plenty. Vibhishana and the Vanara heroes were wonder struck at the magnificent elaborateness of these events. They stayed on for six months in the Capital, serving Rama both day and night, in full exultation. The six months sped away as a single day for them. They had no memory

of their homes, their families or their kingdoms during all that period of time.

At last, Rama called all the companions and comrades, who had accompanied him, into the Audience Hall and seated them in appropriate places. Then, he addressed them in soft, sweet accents, thus: “Friends, you have all toiled hard on my behalf. Of course, it is not proper to praise you to your face. You confronted various difficulties for my sake, giving up your homes, not worrying about your wives and children and unconcerned about your properties and possessions. I have no friends other than you all. Therefore, I have special love and compassion towards you. More than my parents, more than my brothers, more than my kingdom, more than my subjects, and more than even my Sita, you are my loved ones. This is my firm assertion. So, I now require you to proceed to your homes. Serve me after installing me in your hearts, with faith and devotion. I shall grant you the fortune of seeing me, beside you, behind you, before you and in your homes. I shall grant you Grace.”

They listened to these words so full of Grace and Love, and they were so overcome by gratefulness and joy that they forgot themselves and their surroundings. They did not allow their eyes to stray away from the face of Rama. They shed tears of delight abounding. They could not utter a single word in reply. The tongue was unable to pronounce any. Then, under orders from Rama, the servitors brought large quantities of clothing and jewels. Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna were requested to offer them to

the members of the party and to personally help them in wearing them. The Vanaras and Vibhishana were then assisted by them in putting them on and they shone with added charm and brightness. But the Vanaras were unaffected by what was done. They stood unmoved and stiff, looking only at the Feet of Rama, their adored Lord. All bowed their heads and fell at those lovely feet. Rama lifted them gently and embraced them with great affection.

Rama told the departing groups of Vanaras and others, "Children and friends! I am awarding you the Sarupya stage of liberation, by which you are endowed with powers and attainments approximating to mine own. Go back and carry out the duties devolving upon you with success and fulfil the responsibilities with which you are involved. Rule over the lands and peoples entrusted to your care and enjoy peace and prosperity." Rama provided them valuable counsel of various kinds and gave them leave to depart. Bharatha and Satrughna were struck with admiration by the devotion that shone in the hearts of the Vanaras and others. As Rama commanded, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna accompanied the party for some distance until they reached the outskirts of the City. Even as they sat in the chariots provided for them, the Vanaras turned back wistfully and shed tears at the thought of leaving Rama. The brothers saw the anguish in their faces and could not bear the sight. They knew the meaning of those streams of tears and those sad looks and praised the spirit of dedication which filled their hearts. They gave them company until the river bank

and they supervised arrangements for ferrying them across. Then the brothers returned to Ayodhya. Hanuman also returned with them. He prayed and pleaded with Sugriva, his ruler, and promised to return after about ten days for, as he said, "I cannot bear the pang of separation." Though Sugriva was not very happy, and in spite of his protests, Hanuman came back along with Lakshmana and others to where Rama was.

One day, Rama proceeded to a garden with his brothers and his dear Hanuman, in order to spend some time strolling through it. The place was replete with flowers and fruits. Rama sat on an elevated seat, with the brothers on his side. The brothers were found hesitating to ask some questions, though they had the desire within them. They looked at Hanuman and communicated their feelings to him. They knew that if Hanuman put those questions, Rama would fain give the answers. The omnipresent Rama recognised the situation. "Hanuman! What is it you seek to know? Ask," he said. Hanuman replied, "Oh Protector of the Weak! Bharatha wanted to ask you a question. But he was stricken by doubt. He is downcast with a sense of fear." He folded his palms and fell at the feet of Rama, for having answered his query so bluntly, and in thankfulness that he was commanded to speak in the presence. Rama then spoke thus, "Hanuman! You know full well my nature. There is no difference between me and Bharatha, nothing to make either feel distinct." When Bharatha heard these words, he fell at the feet of Rama, and said, "Oh Healer of the Miseries of

those who surrender to you! Listen. Pardon my errors and protect me. I have no doubts lurking in my mind. I have no griefs and no attachments, even in my dreams. Of course, I owe all this to your grace and compassion. You are the treasure house of all the virtues. I desire to learn the distinction between good men and bad.”

Rama deigned to reply. He said, “Brother, the qualities that mark out the good are endless in number, as the Vedas and Puranas say. The distinction that separates the good and the bad are as wide as that between the sandal tree and the axe. Note this; even when the axe cuts the sandal tree, the tree confers on the axe the fragrance it possesses. The axe is killing it, but the tree does only good to its executioner. Hence, the sandal is appreciated by all. The Gods love to have sandal paste on their foreheads. But see what happens to the axe that does harm to the tree that wishes it well. It is kept in fire and while red-hot, it is hammered into shape and sharpness. Wicked persons cause grief to good men in this manner. But the good always wish well and do good to the wicked, whatever harm is done to them. What is their gain? They certainly attain heaven. That is to say, they are in constant bliss. The bad persons, on the other hand, will be constantly struggling in sorrow and discontent. That is to say, they will be subject to hellish agony. Though they may appear happy to observers, they will be tortured inside by the infamy and the hatred they invoke.

“I shall tell you the characteristics of good men. Listen. They are not fascinated by sensual pleasures. They possess all the best virtues and modes of behaviour. They will be happy at the happiness of others. They will be sad when others are sad. They look upon all with equal affection. They have no enemies and they are not bothered even if foes exist. They are endowed with wisdom, knowledge of the objective world, and a deep sense of detachment. Their hearts are tender. They have compassion towards the weak and the helpless. They adore my feet with purity of thought, word and deed. They delight in serving me. They have no concern with fame or infamy, honour or dishonour. They are always interested in serving others. They never yield to the urge of selfishness, even in dreams. Their actions are transparently simple. Their hearts are ever cool and unruffled. They yearn for opportunities to renounce. They are every moment soaked in joy. For them praise and blame are the same. Brother! Whoever has these characteristics in him, take it that he is of my own nature. He is myself, I am himself. Take that to be the truth.

“Now, I shall tell you of the qualities of bad men, listen. You should avoid their company, by all means. Grief will descend upon you as a result of that companionship. Their hearts will be pained at the prosperity of others. They will delight as much in scandalising others, as in welcoming a fortune. The six foes of good men—lust, anger, greed, desire, pride and hatred are fostered by them and they are ever at their beck and call. They move about and act

according to the commands of these six. Pity and charity are absent in their makeup. They pick up quarrels with others for no reason or on no provocation. They develop enmity even towards those who do good to them. Their actions are false. Their utterances are false. Their dealings of give and take are false. Their attitudes are hard. They have hearts of stone. The peacock is charming to behold. Its cry is pleasant to hear, but it kills snakes. So too wicked men are eager to harm others, and craving for others' wives. They relish damaging the reputation of others. They revel in evil. They are evil-minded all the time. They are the meanest among men. They have no fear of retribution. When they see or hear about the progress of another, they are possessed by so much envy that they are afflicted with unbearable headache. But when others are caught in calamity, they exult over their sufferings. When others are suffering, they are elated as if they have been crowned kings of the realm. They are dominated by the ego. They do not have any thought of helping others, even in their dreams! Their hearts are the birthplaces of lust, anger and other passions. They have no consideration towards parents, preceptors or elders. They feel disgust at the very mention of "good personages" or "God." Their intellects are dull. Their conduct is reprehensible. They can be observed in large numbers during the Kali Yuga.

"Brother, of all righteous acts, help rendered to those needing it is the most righteous. Of all evil acts, there is nothing worse than causing harm to others. Know that this

is the essence of the teachings of the Vedas and the Puranas. This is the ideal, held forth by good men everywhere. Those who are benefited by birth as men, and yet indulge in injuring others, are degraded into lower bestial levels and have to be born and die as those beings. Or, when born again as men, they commit further evils through their ignorance and the blindness it causes. For such, I am the meter-out of Karma-consequence and it is only after a long passage of time during which they have to struggle out of the darkness, that I vouchsafe a Vision of Myself. I throw them again and again into the vortex of life and make them experience the ups and downs so that they might be educated.

"Bharatha, the gods, the sages and the great personages do not engage themselves in acts involving dualities. They are ever engaged in adoring me in a dedicated state of mind. They engage themselves in activities without any desire or attachment to the consequence of those activities. If austerities are taken up in order to gain some ends, if activities are undertaken with a view to earn the fruits they yield, people have to be born with bodies so that they may be awarded the good and the bad which those activities deserve. When the fruits are not craved for, and acts are still done sincerely and rightly and correctly, they don't bind. On the other hand, they confer wisdom on the doer. The person will have his devotion and dedication advanced a great deal. And as a result, he will be nearer to the Supreme and merge in the Supreme. When you are able to

distinguish between the good and the bad on the basis of these characteristics, and act accordingly while choosing company, you will be able to extricate yourselves from the coils of the sea of change, the Samsara Ocean. Brother! Know that all distinctions between good and bad are basically the result of attachment and development, due to your considering the world as real, while it is neither real nor unreal. Those who have escaped this ‘illusion’ and this duality are the Mahatmas. They have realised that their reality is the unchanging Atma. They know that there are no two. They experience always only the One. Others are the ignorant lot.”

The brother and others who listened to this clarification attained equanimity. Their hearts were delighted with the upsurge of Love. They acknowledged the kindness of Rama by gratefully prostrating before him. This they did for each point that was clarified. Hanuman felt the ecstasy more than all others. Later, Rama proceeded to the Palace, accompanied by the brothers and Hanuman. This became the normal routine every day—conveying counsel and then, the carrying on of the duties of administration.

One day, Rama desired that the citizens of Ayodhya assemble in the Palace, with the Preceptors and the Brahmins. They all met at the Durbar Hall, and were provided comfortable seats. Rama came into the Hall and addressed them thus:

“Citizens! Preceptors and Brahmins! Prostrations to you. Listen to my words in peace and to the very end. I am

not discoursing to you in pride or selfish conceit. It is also not to declare that I am your monarch. Nor is it to lead you to journey along evil paths. If my words appear good to you, then, follow the path I indicate. But I must say this: those who listen to my words and walk accordingly, those alone are dear to me. They alone are my brothers. If I utter anything wrong, point it out to me instantly, without hesitation. Well, birth as a human being is hailed in the Vedas and Puranas and by wise men of all lands as the rarest chance of all. The human birth cannot be achieved unless a great deal of merit is built up in many lives previous to this. Even gods yearn for the chance and find it hard to get born as men. Birth as a human opens the door to Liberation. It provides wide opportunities for undergoing Sadhana and benefiting by them. The human body is to be used not for enjoying sensual pleasures. It is not to be treated as an instrument for reaching Heaven and delight in heavenly toys and joys. These pleasures are all momentary. They bring you back again into the tangle of change, the toil of birth and death. Therefore, these pleasures bring about sorrow. Only fools will be led away into the pursuit of these sensual pleasures. Such pleasures are as poison to man. Is it proper to seek poison, in preference to Nectar? Those who crave for poison cannot be good men. They are like the fools who discard the Wish-fulfilling-gem (*Chintamani*) and prefer a bead of glass. Being endowed with the human body, if a person does not use it for crossing the Ocean of illusory Existence (*Samsara*) he is indeed to be pitied as unfortunate and of dull intellect. He is indeed the slayer of

his own self, the enemy of his own progress. Therefore, those who are born as men have to realise that God resides in all men as the Atma within and to serve everyone as Divine, and regard that service as the most proper worship of God. Observe the dictates of God with a full heart. Carry out all activities as if you are dedicating them to God.

Citizens! Those who yearn to be happy here and hereafter! Listen to my words. Have them as your guides and your goals. Follow this path. Of all paths that lead to God and Self-realisation, the path of Devotion (*Bhakthi*) is the easiest, it is a path full of delight for the mind. The Path of discrimination and elimination of illusion (*Jnana*) is fraught with difficulties and packed with obstacles. It is well-nigh impossible to extinguish the mind. Even those who travel along the hard path of Jnana can become dear to me only if they have devotion and love in their hearts. There is nothing equal to Bhakthi. Bhakthi is not bound, it is free. It endows man with all joys and delights. It must be emphasised that you can progress in Bhakthi only when you seek and stay in *Sathsanga*, good company.” Continuing his discourse to the assembly Rama said, “Listen, Oh People of my Kingdom! I wish to tell you one very important Truth, often not clearly grasped by you. Do not attribute any distinction between Siva and Kesava. Believe that God is one. The Name and the Form are distinct, but the *Divyatma* (the Universal Absolute Entity) is the same. That Divyatma is in everyone in equal potency.”

Hearing these nectarine teachings from the lips of Rama, the citizens bowed their heads in reverential homage.

One of them came forward to express their gratitude. He said, “Lord! We are attached to you more than to our own lives. Our bodies are healthy and hardy because of you. Our homes are resonant with joy and happiness because of you. It is all due to your Grace. You have rid us of sorrow and drawn us near you. Maharaja! Who else can teach us so lovingly as you do? Our own fathers and mothers seek from us the fulfilment of their selfish desires. That is all. Of what use are we for you? But yet, you train us for attaining the Bliss of Heaven. This gives us full contentment. You and your excellent followers have done magnificent service to the world, by destroying the demonic race. We can never acquire a Lord, a Friend, a Father, as kind and considerate as You.” The people expressed their joy and the sense of enlightenment plentifully before Rama. Rama brightened at their loyalty and eagerness to learn more about spiritual matters. The citizens took leave of Rama and returned to their homes. They reminded themselves of the valuable truths they had been taught.

In the City of Ayodhya, every house had a flower garden attached to it. The residents tended the garden with love and care. It was perpetual spring in Ayodhya, for, the plants were heavy with fruits and fragrant with blooms throughout the year. Clusters of bees hovered over the blooms and their murmur could be heard all over. A cool breeze, heavy with the scent of flowers, greeted everyone. Children of the City had many species of birds as pets. Their songs, twitters and chirps mingled to make charming music to the ear.

The wealth and prosperity of the citizens under the benign reign of Rama cannot be adequately described by even a thousand thousand-tongued Seshas. This was the result of the righteousness (Dharma) which Rama fostered and guarded. Rama celebrated many an Aswamedha Sacrifice. Millions and millions of Brahmins were granted generous gifts and they were made happy and contented. Rama, the Promoter of Vedic Rites and Ceremonials and the Guardian of the Codes of Dharma, (but yet, above and beyond all obligations and attributes—*Gunathitha*), as well as Sita, replete with all auspicious attributes and intent on helping all who craved to fulfil their beneficial obligations—were both vigilant in their task of keeping themselves and their subjects on the Path of Dharma. Physical illness, mental anxiety and moral downfall were totally absent, when Rama ruled. People had deep love and affection for each other. Everyone struck gladly to the duties and rights sanctioned by the Vedas to the community and the profession. Austerity, charity, sacrifices, spiritual ritual and studies continued unabated and even enthusiastically all over the land. Sinful thoughts dared not peep into minds of people, even in their dreams. Women, men, old persons, children—all were at all times revelling in thoughts of Rama. There was no calamity or natural catastrophe evident anywhere. During the Rama age, there were no poor, no grief-stricken, no one humbled or crestfallen, no one cruel or hateful, no one ugly or ghastly to behold. Everyone had all the marks of charm. No one hurt another with his pride and pomp. No one envied another. All were versed in Atmic

wisdom. All were eager to practise and protect Dharma. All were compassionate and intent on serving others. Each one was eager to extol the good qualities of another. No one gave room for egoism in his heart.

The entire Globe, with its seven Dwipas bordered by the Oceans, was under the shade of the single Umbrella of Rama's sovereignty. Over this entire region, Rama was the sole undisputed Lord. In this imperial domain, people enjoyed mutual love and mutual help. There was no trace of faction or fight; apartness and the big stick were not evident at all. Of course, distinction came to the fore in dance and the arts. The stick was evident in the hands of ascetics and monks. Fighting was to be seen only when used against the senses by Sadhakas. Attachment (*raga*, also meaning, tunes) could be noticed as raga only in music. When no one had any enemy, how could "killing" be done? But people killed the vagaries of the mind instead and won victories over their own lower natures.

The City and environs shone with incomparably attractive wells, lakes and tanks. Oh the pure waters! Oh the beautiful landing places! Their sublime charm drew admiration from sages and seers. They blamed themselves for being so attracted. The lakes and tanks had lotuses of many colours blossoming on their surface. Many birds were singing on the trees growing thick on their banks. Parrots, peacocks, and others clustered on the branches and made merry. The City was more splendid than even Heaven and people were wonder struck at its uniqueness.

One day, Vasishtha entered the Palace in order to see Rama, the Grantor of prosperity in all fields. Rama received him in true traditional style, washing his feet and offering sanctified water as drink. He raised his folded palms and said, “Oh Ocean of Compassion! I have a request to make. I have been watching most delightfully your ‘play as man.’ I am beset with a big doubt, now. Your potency is limitless. Even the Vedas do not know fully your Nature. Lord! How can I describe you, or decipher you? This profession of Family Preceptor or Priest is rather derogatory. The Vedas, Sastras and Puranas declare that priesthood is inferior in status, since it is a mean occupation. He has to officiate at all the ceremonies in his master’s household, both auspicious and inauspicious. Therefore, it is contaminated. First I did not agree at all to enter this profession, but Brahma saw me and understood my plight. He told me, ‘Son! You do not know what lies in the future. Accept the profession, without demur. You stand to gain enormously in the coming years. The Parabrahma will incarnate in the Raghu dynasty.’ Hearing this, I bowed my head to this profession and became the Family Priest of the Raghu dynasty. I have now, as a result of that decision, attained that Supreme Principle, which can be won only by means of countless years of Japa, Thapas, Meditation and Yoga, besides the performance of many Yagas and Yajnas, without putting myself into the hardship involved in these. All those good Karmas have as the goal to be won, and I have won you.

“What better work have I to do than the one I have chosen? Lord of Lords! Japa, Thapas, Yajnas, Yagas, Vows, Rites and Ritual rules have been laid down in the Vedas. Through the cultivation of wisdom, compassion towards living beings, and virtuous conduct, your Presence and Grace can be attained. Lord! I am praying for a boon. Grant me that in your infinite mercy. Shower your Grace on me from the corner of your compassion-filled eye. Let my devotion for you be undiminished, however many lives I have to live hereafter. This is the boon I crave for.” Later Vasishtha returned to his residence, taking leave of Rama.

The subjects of the kingdom spent their time singing the thrice-holy captivating story of their Ruler, Rama. One might have achieved success in Yoga or performed many ritual vows but, if one has no love in his heart, he could not get Darsan of Rama. The wise man, the ascetic, the hero, the poet, the scholar, the accomplished, no one of these were afflicted, in Rama’s empire, with greed. No one strayed into wrong, urged by pride of wealth. The intoxication of authority did not render anyone deaf. Where was the young man who suffered from the fever of Youth? Or, where could be found the man who lost his fame through yielding to the pull of selfishness? Where was the man tainted by enmity? Where was the man suffering from the paralysis of grief? Where was the man bitten by the serpent, anxiety? There was none such—Rama himself standing above and beyond these, as an example for all to emulate. He is the *Atmaswarupa*, God Himself.

The redoubtable armies of Maya are roaming all over this world. The soldiers are the passions, lust, greed, etc. Pride, unbelief, etc. are the commanding officers. But the same Maya is the bond-slave of Raghunatha, Rama. She is 'unreal,' but, yet, unless you have the Grace of Rama you cannot escape from capture and bondage. The Grace flowing from the corner of his eye alone can liberate you from her grip. Maya "possesses" all movable and immovable things in the universe. No one can be free from her hold. She imitates the earthly glory of the Lord and like a skilled actress, she enacts her role with lust, greed and others as supporting cast. Rama, however, as the embodiment of Satchidananda, as the personification of the Deep Blue that characterises the Sea and Sky, the Phenomenon that has no Birth, as the Paramatma Itself, has no trace of Maya in Him.

In the City of Ayodhya, every day was a new Festival, every Festival was marked out with some novel features of entertainment. Each day, Rama gave away riches as charity. It was laid down that no one should blame another or scorn another. No bad word should be uttered. In every home, there were daily readings of the Vedas and the Puranas. No community of people looked on another or considered another as inferior. Each carried on its traditional occupation and respected the norms laid down. Therefore, compassion and affection towards the subjects grew quick and large in Rama's heart. Observing the devotion and dedication with which wives in Rama's kingdom served their husbands,

even the Gods grew envious of men. The husbands too shone as persons deserving such service. No one brought a single tear from the eyes of those wedded to them. Husband and wife had the feeling that each was half the body of the other and so, they got on as one, desiring each other's best interests and devoted to their realisation. In Rama's time, no one attempted to have recourse to falsehood under any circumstance. Boys and girls honoured the commands and directions of parents and preceptors. Everyone was as happy as the Lord of Gods in Heaven, Indra. Grain and riches were as plentiful in every home as in the place of the God of Wealth, Kubera. The Chakora birds were glad as if they were looking on at the Moon in Autumn, Sarathkala. Women watched Rama from behind the doors of their enclosed apartments and were delighted. Bharatha, Lakshmana and Satrughna were thrilled continuously in mind, filling their eyes with the Divine Charm of Sri Rama. The entire world was filled with full splendour while it was being ruled by Rama. There was no trace or mention of "sin." The monks and ascetics wandered about fearless in the wildest woods. The mutual affection between the King and his subjects grew more and more from day to day. The earth shone with Love and Light. The forests were shimmering in perpetual green. Birds and beasts had lost their instinctive hatred for one another. Not even an iota of hatred was to be found anywhere, nor was there even a whisper indicating its existence. All were bound by the thickest of comradeships. Every individual evinced great

enthusiasm in describing the excellences and achievements of Rama.

One day, Rama was on his throne, in the Audience Hall, along with his brothers. A Brahmin entered the Hall in great distress. He spoke many harsh words and pleaded angrily for redress. "Alas," he cried, "the fame of the Solar Dynasty has ended today. I remember the glory of the great kings of the past, Sibi, Raghu, Dilipa, Sagara; for, such iniquities would not have happened when those Kings were ruling. Will a son ever die during the lifetime of the father? Can such a disaster happen if the ruler is good? But this day, I saw this thing happen." Rama, who is omnipresent, was able to know what had taken place. He was affected by the words spoken by the Brahmin. He probed within himself the reason for the death and assured his mind that it had not occurred as a result of any administrative fault. He was aware that it was the consequence of evil thoughts, and so he set about prescribing limits and regulations which would prevent such thoughts from arising in people's minds. Rama paid great attention even to such small matters and designed measures to prevent their recurrence. He laid aside all concern about himself and sought to realise the goal he had set before himself, viz., the happiness of his people. He cared for his subjects as if they were as dear to him as his own body. The people too valued the affection and happiness of the King. He was to them as dear as his heart. The Ruler never worked against the wishes of the people. They, too, did not overstep even by a hair's breadth the

orders given by Rama. The Ramaraja of those days was resplendent thus for many years. Rama was Narayana Himself. So, his reign redounded to the glory of the earth and its history. For, Truth and Righteousness are the real guardians of mankind.