

3. Ask For Me

Today, you had the nectar of *Ramayana* from these two pandits. They spoke with genuine joy when they dilated on the incidents of the *Ramayana*. One of them selected today the hospitality shown to Bharatha and his retinue by the sage Bharadwaja and how Bharatha reacted to it. The other Sastry, who generally talks on other topics, was persuaded this evening to select Narada's description of the qualities of Rama to Valmiki as the theme of his talk. Remembrance of Rama's name (*Ramanama*) is so sweet that I could see all of you relishing these talks. If a man talks about Rama without himself being inspired by the glory of the Lord, it sounds hollow; it is of no benefit; it is like the image of a table heavy with edible dishes seen inside a mirror — the dishes in the mirror will fill no hungry stomach. No language can picture the actual bliss that the Name can confer; words can at best delineate only an atom of that joy.

People come into the world burdened with delusion (*maya*) and its instrument, the mind. The mind expresses itself through attraction and repulsion, affection and hatred (*raga* and *dvesha*) toward the external world. Affection is passionate (*rajasic*) in its effect; it can be used for one's uplift, as Narada used it to fix attention on the Lord. Hatred is negativistic (*thamasic*), as Durvasa expressed it in his dealings with Ambarisha and others. Without affection and hatred, the mind cannot function at all. If these two are removed, there can be no mind and no delusion, and you get fixed in spiritual wisdom (*jnana*). Let affection and hatred go and let Rama enter; then there will be no mind or illusion (*manas* or *maya*).

Have aversion toward evil, pride, and egoism

The *Taithiriya Upanishad* analyses the mind and its behaviour very well. It gives directions for merging the mind in God and the weapons with which you can foil the tactics of affection and hatred. Use them for positive purposes, as Narada and Durvasa did. Have attachment to the Lord and aversion toward evil, pride, egoism. Water and fire are incompatible; fire is put out by water. But, by means of fire, you can convert water into steam and use it to haul long lines of heavy wagons.

How to overcome affection and hatred? By discrimination, by inquiry, by reasoning — arrive at the truth by this means. Duryodhana, though he stuck to falsehood, greed, and envy, had a swell time according to the *Mahabharatha* — flags flying, festoons swinging, banquets every day. But Yudhistira, the eldest of the Pandavas, had exile, poverty, and privation as reward for his high morality. This does not mean that Vyasa, who wrote all this, is a cheat or a fool.

Righteousness (*dharma*) stood firm in spite of hardships; faith (*sraddha*) was steadied and strengthened. In the case of Duryodhana, prosperity did not induce caution, humility, or discrimination. So you revere Yudhistira and execrate Duryodhana today, centuries after they died. Valmiki also pictured Rama as wandering forlorn in the forests, but Rama never for a moment wavered in the path of *dharma*. So Rama is revered even today as the embodiment of *dharma*.

Ask to be examined and your progress recorded

The teacher-disciple relationship that has been established between these boys and those who initiated them into the *Gayatri Mantra* has also a special spiritual quality, which directs the pupil to learn with gratitude and the

guru to teach with love. There are cases when the pupil was made to forget all that he had learnt when the *guru* was displeased with his behaviour.

India has been the land of divine communion, of renunciation, of the spiritual intuition (*yoga-bhumi*, *thyaga-bhumi*, *veda-bhumi*). It spoke of *sama-dhi*, the wisdom that sees all as equal repositories of Divinity. Equanimity of outlook (*samathwam*) is just a matter of origin and essence; water in lakes, pits, wells, and rivers is rain water, though the taste, colour, name, and form are different based on where the rain fell and how pure the container was. Divine grace is like rain: pure, pellucid, falling on all. How it is received and used depends on the heart of the person.

The Lord does not test a person just for fun; He does not pile calamity on calamity because He enjoys it. Examinations are held to measure achievement and award marks and honours. You must ask to be examined so that your progress may be recorded.

Dheekshith spoke of Bharadwaja setting up an audience hall with a bejewelled throne and all other paraphernalia for the reception of Bharatha. Bharatha mentally installed Rama therein and stood behind, framing his brother. Bharatha was applauded for this act of genuine detachment by the sage. He was glad the citizens came to know the real nature of Bharatha by this means.

The Avatar has no blemish, no trace of quality

Bharatha did not partake of the rich banquet that the sage had prepared. He was too grieved over the turn of events to think of food, drink, and sleep. He did not even take a drop of water before he could speak to Rama. The thought of Rama was so intense in him that people saw Rama in the form of Bharatha. Ceaseless contemplation had made him an exact replica.

That is the depth of fruitful devotion.

But you praise Me when all goes well and call Me stony-hearted when grief assails you. Grief or joy, whatever the Lord hands out, you must welcome with equal calmness.

It was declared that Rama was born of the pudding (*payasam*) that was brought by the deity from out of the sacrificial fire. No *Avatar* is born flesh and blood, including this *Avatar*. The body of the *Avatar* is awarenessful (*chit*) substance; it is not inert (*jada*), like other materials. The embryo of ordinary mortals is enveloped in watery stuff; the embryo of the *Avatar* is encased in the pure white milk of holiness. That is why there is no blemish in the make-up of the *Avatar*, there is no trace of qualities (*gunas*).

Rama's insistence on His vow of hermit-hood

Dasaratha wept, for he had no sons to offer ritual food when he was to move out into the next world. When all are of the form of God and of the substance of God, who is son and who is father? Who is to offer food to whom when that high stage of wisdom is reached? Fortitude (*kshama*) is the father, peace (*santham*) is the mother, renunciation (*vairagya*) is the wife, and the Lord is the son, the centre of affection. Dasaratha desired the lower type of son, the male issue, to save him from perdition. This desire brought his "spirit" again before Rama, when Sita was about to enter the fire in Lanka.

Ravana was killed, and Rama asked Sugriva and Lakshmana to crown Vibhishana as Emperor of Lanka,

and he pleaded with Rama Himself to bless him on that auspicious occasion. But Rama insisted that His vow of hermit-hood prevented Him from entering an inhabited city. Then, Rama sent Hanuman to Sita and to bring Sita to the camp in a palanquin. Vibhishana had not thought of that; he was too immersed in other affairs. Hanuman bowed before Sita and got a vision of Lakshmi rising out of the waves of the ocean of milk. He felt that that vision was enough compensation for all the births he had to undergo. While the palanquin neared the camp, a sublime splendour spread everywhere from it, which astonished the monkey hordes. Rama sent word that Sita may alight and walk the remaining distance, so that they may fill their eyes with her glory. This is not mentioned in the books.

Two purposes of Sita's fire ordeal

When Sita was about ten yards away, Rama, who is butter when He melts and steel when He hardens, said, "Stop, I can accept you only after you pass through fire." Lakshmana swooned at this thunderbolt, and the monkeys who had to bring the fuel for the fire bent under the weight of even twigs. The fire ordeal served two purposes: to scorch the slanderous tongues, which haunt the tracks of *Avatars* at all times, and to retrieve from the fire the real Sita who had entered into it, prior to abduction by Ravana.

Dasaratha also came, to assure Rama that Sita was purity itself and also to satisfy his parental craving to see his son. He appreciated the steadfastness of Rama in the respect he had for his father's wish; he also saw the monkeys rise again from the battlefield and gather around Rama. The demonic persons (*rakshasas*) had already attained liberation, for they had the vision of God when they drew their last breaths. "The monkeys came down to be My instruments, so they have no death. Neither are they born, except at My command," said Rama.

People must also become His instrument in order to escape death and birth. People have come, imprisoned in the ego, and have to liberate themselves. This can be done only by becoming aware of the Universal Basis. Like a man sunk in poverty, dwelling in a hut that is raised over a vast underground treasure, people are suffering with a spring of joy inside them, of which they are unaware. I have come to give you the key to that treasure, to tell you how to tap that spring, for you have forgotten the way to blessedness. If you waste this chance of saving yourselves, it is just your fate.

Do not hunger for comfort or riches

You have come, most of you, to get from Me tinsel and trash, petty little cures and promotions, joys and comforts. Very few of you desire to get from Me the thing I have come to give, viz. liberation itself—and even among these few, those who stick to the path of spiritual practice and succeed are a handful. Many are drawn away by the outer signs of sainthood, the long gown, the beard, the rosaries, the matted hair; they keep track of many such who move about in this land and follow them into the wilderness.

It is very difficult to demarcate clearly the manifestation of the Lord, so I am announcing Myself and am Myself describing My mission, the task, the characteristics, the qualities that mark out the *Avatar* from the rest. Do not hunger for comfort or riches; hunger for bliss (*ananda*).

If you have faith, and if you keep the name of Rama as constant companion, you are in heaven (Vaikunta or Kailas) all the time. These are not distant regions that have to be reached by tortuous travel; they are springs of tranquillity that are in your own heart. You cannot have this chance of the nearness of the greatest of all sources of joy in any other place. Here, it is so near, so easy to attain, so full of grace. If you fall back, you will seldom get

the chance again. Ask and get what will save you, not what will bind you.

You ask from Me a thousand things of the world, but rarely do you ask for “Me”. That is why I seldom address you as devotees. I usually address you as Embodiments of the Divine (*Divyatma swarupulara*), for Divinity (*Divyathwam*) is your real true nature. Though you do not know it, it is a fact, so I can address you so with confidence. I can even call you Embodiments of heavenly Divinity, but as for devotion, since it is a quality that will make you desire the Lord and nothing else, I find you cannot lay claim to it.

Methods to curb the Ravana tendency

Some of you claim to be Sai devotees or Rama devotees or Krishna devotees. No, unless you are perfect instruments in His hand, you do not deserve that name. For example, Bharatha can call himself a Rama devotee. He lived with name of Rama in every breath; he was with Rama in the forest and on the battlefield; he suffered as much as Rama; he was as much an anchorite as his brother, so he too became dark skinned like Rama.

Listening, contemplating on what has been listened to, and practising what is dictated by the mind so transfused—these are the methods by which the Ravana tendency has to be curbed. What is that tendency? It is lust, greed, inordinate desire for things of the sensory world, egoism, and the rest of the fatal brood.

When the pot of milk on the hearth boils over, you pour cold water on it, and it settles down in the vessel itself, is it not? Durvasa is the example of the pot boiling over, and Narada, of the pot of milk that does not. Narada had the name of the Lord always on his tongue, so the senses did not establish mastery. If you also keep your senses and your wishes in check, you will gain by listening to these talks and by this visit, and I will be happy that you have taken to the path that will give you real strength and joy.

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No one can liberate you, for no one has bound you. You hold on to the nettle of worldly pleasure, and you weep for pain.

The kite is pursued by crows as long as it carries the fish in its beak. It twists and turns in the sky trying to dodge the crows, who seek to snatch the fish. Tired at last, it drops the fish. That moment it is free.

So give up attachment to the senses, and grief and worry can harass you no more. The kite sits on a tree, preening its wings, enjoying its happiness. You too can be so happy, provided you drop the fish you have in your beak.

Sathya Sai Baba