

## 8. The Supreme Devotion of Vibhishana

*When divine feelings do not surge in the heart,  
Man becomes infected with two flaws.  
He conceals his countless blunders, and  
He criticises even minor mistakes of others.*

### **Embodiments of Love,**

The portraits of two personalities are very striking in the *Ramayana*. They are those of Sugriva and Vibhishana. Vibhishana went in quest of Rama, while Rama Himself went in search of Sugriva. Sugriva realised Rama's greatness and goodness only after meeting Him, while Vibhishana knew of Rama's excellence even before he met Him.

The Kurukshetra war lasted for eighteen days, but the war between Rama and Ravana lasted for seventy-five days. Though the warfare, in a physical sense, lasted for seventy-five days at Lanka, the inner war between Rama and Ravana, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, truth and untruth, and righteousness and unrighteousness is being fought endlessly in the human heart. No one can tell for certain when the conflict and the clash between the positive and the negative forces will come to an end.

It is not possible for everyone to understand Divinity. The one who misappropriates the wife of another and the one who mocks the noble ones can never

understand Divinity. Only those who are pure and compassionate can hope to understand Divinity.

### **Vibhishana's gift**

Indrajit, the eldest son of Ravana, was bent upon burning Rama to ashes by performing certain sacrifices and rituals. The magic tricks employed by Indrajit wrought much havoc and confusion amongst Rama's army. Vibhishana who was well versed in the tricks of the demons, employed counter tricks and nullified the power of their magic rituals. Vibhishana drew the attention of Rama and Lakshmana to the blackberry tree under which Indrajit performed the magic rituals. The entire place under the tree was littered with bodies of sacrificed humans. Vibhishana cautioned Rama and Lakshmana about the magic practices of Indrajit and told them that they should see to it that Indrajit was drawn away from that tree. He informed them that Indrajit's power and strength multiplied immensely when he was in the proximity of that tree.

Indrajit who watched Vibhishana helping Rama's forces on the battlefield, raged in fury. His fury increased when he found Lakshmana coming toward him, carried on the shoulders of Hanuman, and guided by Vibhishana. He said to Vibhishana, "You are the betrayer of Lanka, you are the destroyer of your own people." Vibhishana retorted, "Indrajit, it is a quality of bad people to waste time by indulging in tall and unnecessary talk. Many a time I advised your father Ravana to desist from evil ways. But he never paid heed to me. I tried to put sense into the head of your

father by advising him that it is a sin to misappropriate another's wife. I also told him that he would bring dire disaster to himself and his people by resorting to *adharma*. I forewarned your father, in the presence of Kumbhakarna and Surpanakha. It is your father who, by deliberately indulging in evil, has brought himself and Lanka to this state. My good words had no effect. To your father, unrighteousness is the dearest thing. Untruth is his joy, wickedness is his life. How can the heart of a person laden with so much evil ever change? It is your father who is the architect of this misfortune to Lanka. The destruction of Lanka is his own doing. I am in no way the cause for all this." Unconvinced by these words, Indrajit screamed, "If you did not want to support my father, you could have at least remained neutral without joining the ranks of the enemy." To this Vibhishana replied, "You don't have the wisdom to distinguish between truth and untruth, righteousness and unrighteousness. Having realised the difference between them, I joined the side of Sri Rama. It is unjust and unrighteous on the part of a person to remain neutral when *dharma* is in danger. Society should be saved from Ravana. I enjoy the divine proximity of Rama and that is my greatest treasure."

### **The example of the tongue**

Vibhishana conducted himself with the utmost truthfulness, righteousness, and piety in Lanka. When Hanuman first landed in Lanka, he encountered Vibhishana at the latex's palace. He said to Hanuman, "Oh Hanuman! I am conducting myself carefully amongst these demons like a tongue amidst the teeth. How long can I live like this? When will I earn Lord

Rama's Grace? When will I enjoy the proximity of the Lord?" Then Hanuman said to Vibhishana, "Oh Vibhishana, the good people in this world are harassed by the wicked demons, who are like the sharp teeth that surround a tongue. But mark one thing. The tongue was born along with you, while the teeth came in the middle and will fall away in the middle. But the tongue which was born with you will last until your death."

The tongue is a sacred organ. It is virtuous too. It is an embodiment of sweetness and truth though surrounded by the vile, the vicious and the wicked. The teeth do not allow the tongue to come out but in times of necessity it comes out and helps. When the lips run dry, the tongue comes out and moistens the lips.

### **The devotion of Tulsidas**

There were many sages and *sadhakas* who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Rama. Tulsidas was a great devotee of God who lived on the Chitrakoota mountain. Every day after his bath, he would offer holy water to a tree. One day, a spirit appeared in front of him and said, "Oh master, while you discourse on the *Ramayana*, there is a person, an old man, who comes here first and is the last one to leave. Tomorrow, you must cling to his feet and ask for a boon." The spirit told him this and disappeared.

On the next day, Tulsidas was busy preparing sandal paste and singing the name of Rama. After some time, the old Brahmin came there. Tulsidas began discoursing on the *Ramayana*. At the end of the

discourse, everyone went away except the Brahmin. Tulsidas went to him and fell at his feet. The Brahmin asked Tulsidas what boon he wanted. Tulsidas replied, "I want to have the *darshan* of the beautiful form of Sri Rama." The Brahmin then said, "You will have the *darshan* of Sri Rama in a few days." Who was this Brahmin? It was none else than Hanuman. He would present himself wherever the glory of Rama is sung. Hanuman always passes into rapture while listening to the glory of Rama.

A few days later, a boy of tender age came to Tulsidas when he was preparing sandal paste for the Lord. He approached Tulsidas and said, "Oh grand sire, will you give some paste to me?" Tulsidas readily agreed to do this favour for the boy. While he was giving the paste to the boy, the birds on the tree felt pity for Tulsidas, since he did not recognise that the boy was the same Lord Rama, for whom he had been pinning for so many years. The Lord is everywhere.

*Whether you are in the forest or in the de-  
sert,  
Whether you are in town or village,  
Whether you are on the mountain top or  
midstream,  
The Lord helps the hapless ones.*

Two days after this incident, the old man asked Tulsidas whether he had seen the Lord on the previous day. Tulsidas replied in the negative. The old man said, "Who do you think came yesterday in the form of a boy to take sandal paste from you? All forms are His

and all names are His. It is foolishness to worship Him in one form only. Ramachandra is the In-dweller of your heart. Your heart is the altar of God. Don't install anyone in the altar of your heart except the Lord. My son, you may give room to your kith and kin in any part of your house, but do not install them in the altar of your shrine. Kith and kin come in the middle and go away in the middle. Serve them, but do not give your heart to them. Fill your heart with compassion. A heart laden with compassion is the temple of the Lord. *Hrudh + daya makes hrudaya.*" Hanuman taught this lesson to Tulsidas and disappeared.

### **Never give up**

Hanuman fought the battle, his mind absorbed in Rama. He exchanged spiritual ideas with Vibhis-hana very often. He said,

*Having grasped what ought to be grasped, Hold on till you succeed;*

*Having desired what ought to be desired, Hold on till you succeed;*

*Having asked what ought to be asked, Hold on till you succeed;*

*Having thought what ought to be thought, Hold on till you succeed.*

*Disgusted with you, He should yield to you!*

*When you ask, ask with fervour.*

*That is what a devotee should do.*

*A devotee should never accept defeat and go away.*

Vibhishana was an aspirant par excellence. Even while he was a tender boy, he performed penance and propitiated the Lord. Lord Brahma appeared in front of him and said, "O Vibhishana! Ask whatever you want." Vibhishana said to the Lord, "Lord! Bless me so that I lead a life of righteousness, charity, and sacrifice. My heart should overflow with compassion and it should never be hard." Brahma blessed him. Kumbhakarna, who was of demonic nature, performed penance and Lord Brahma asked him to pray for a boon. Kumbhakarna wanted to ask him the boon of a heart bereft of compassion, that is, *Nirdaya* (devoid of compassion). But due to the thick tongue typical of demons, he uttered the word *nidra* (sleep) instead. Then onward, Kumbhakarna became a great sleeper. A person devoid of compassion is not human (*manava*), but a demon (*dhanava*). We should not be devoid of compassion at any time. It is said:

*It is by dint of devotion that one should find fulfilment in life.*

*Whether he is a prince or a pauper, a fool or a scholar,  
It is by dint of devotion that he should find fulfilment.*

*Whether he performs penance holding his nose,*

*Whether he dons ochre robe or holds his breath,*

*Whether he is adorned by ornaments and necklaces,*

*It is by dint of devotion that he would find fulfilment.*

By constant effort, Vibhishana filled his heart with the quality of compassion. That is why he could understand the Rama Principle. He lived a life of devotion, observing truth and righteousness. The name and form of the Lord correspond to truth and right-

eousness. *Sathya* and *dharma* are the very core of the *Ramayana*.

### **God's main address**

Rama held spiritual discussions with the Vanara warriors and imparted to them many great lessons. He told them to behave like the tongue surrounded by rapier-like teeth. Obstacles litter the way of an aspirant at every stage. The tongue outlasts the teeth. Wicked people will fall off like the teeth that surround the tongue. Wicked people will leave you as the teeth leave the tongue. God is your Protector. Protection by God is the talisman for you. God will do anything for you. Thyagaraja said:

*O Lord! who can adequately praise you?  
I am waiting and waiting for your compassion.  
Feel compassion for me.  
You restored to Your preceptor his son.  
You released Vasudeva and Devaki;  
You blessed Draupadi with an endless supply of  
cloth.  
You protected the Pandavas.  
You quenched the yearning of Kuchela.  
You transformed the ugly Kubja into a beauty.  
Even Lord Brahma cannot satisfactorily describe  
Your glory.  
I am waiting and pining for Your Grace.*

Once, Narada went to Lord Narayana and asked, "O Lord! Where do you live? Which is Your main address?" The Lord replied, "Vaikunta, Kailasa, and Swarga are My temporary branch-residences. My per-



manent residence is the place where My glory is sung by My devotees.”

The Lord is the resident of our hearts. Let us find Him there.

