

9. Ravana Falls

*Man toils and moils for feeding his belly.
He sweats and struggles for education
but fails to be happy.
Why should humans be steeped in sorrow
like this?
Would not the Lord help if only you pray
sincerely?*

Embodiments of Love!

Truth, righteousness, peace, and love constitute the foundation of the scriptures, the essence of all religions, the destination of all paths, and the essence of all essences.

Man indulges in finding fault with others, oblivious to his own flaws. The cause for this can be traced to his materialistic tendencies. Man is made of *Atma* (Self) and *anatma* (non-self), *shariram* (body) and *shariri* (embodied one), *kshetra* (field) and *kshetra-jna* (knower of the field), and *sthira* (permanent) and *asthira* (ephemeral). You cannot find anything else in this Universe except these dualities.

The entire world is a play of the *pravritti* and the *nivritti*, the outward and inward. Body (*kshetra*) and matter belong to the realm of *pravritti* whereas *Atma*, consciousness, the embodied one, belongs to the realm of *nivritti*. Even the Avatars are subject to *pravritti*, since they have to assume a human body. Rama was no exception to it. Though He was the Omnipotent and the Omniscient One, since He had as-

sumed the human body, He had to behave as if He too was under the spell of illusion.

Ravana beheaded

Rama prepared himself to battle with Ravana. Ravana had lost everybody, including his son Indrajit, his brother Kumbhakarna, and a host of others. Now, Ravana alone was left as a relic of Lanka. The battle between Rama and Ravana lasted seven days and seven nights. Indra who felt delighted that his enemy, Indrajit, had been killed, sent his heavenly chariot equipped with the most powerful weapons, to the battlefield for Rama's use. It was a sight to see the heavenly chariot driven by Mathali, shining splendourously, coming down to the earth. The *vanaras* (monkeys) mistook it to be one more trick of the demons. As the wheels of the chariot touched the earth, Mathali got down and said to Rama with folded hands, "Oh Lord, Indra has sent this chariot and is himself prepared to fight against Ravana."

Rama displayed great practical sense and alertness while fighting on the battlefield. Some people ask why Rama took recourse to war and why He caused the death of so many. The One who creates has also the right to punish. In fact, it is not God who punishes or protects. Your virtues protect you, and your vices punish you. Man cannot escape the consequences of his actions. Ravana had to face the consequences of his notorious deeds. The punishment may not come upon man immediately but it is bound to come for certain. The time had now come for Ravana to face the consequences of his evil deeds.

Once, his Queen, Mandodhari, tried to din sense into his head. She said, “Oh Ravana, you are indulging in heinous and lowly deeds. You are bringing untold suffering and misery to many pure and noble ladies. The heinous sins in which you are indulging will boomerang on you.” She continued, “You cannot escape the inexorable law of *karma*. I am plagued by all sorts of apprehensions about you and about us, though I am the daughter of a great emperor, my son Indrajit an invincible hero, and you are my master. Be careful, for women are like fire. Do not insult women by evil looks, evil words, and evil deeds, for it is great sin.” Ravana did not take the words of Mandodhari seriously. On the other hand, he laughed at her.

The battle between Rama and Ravana was fierce and terrible. Ravana released *sarpastra* (serpent arrow). The entire space was covered by serpents. Rama replied by discharging the *garudastra* (eagle arrow) which ate all the serpents in an instant. Ravana was surprised how a mere human, prowling in the forest, had such immense power and prowess. He now remembered the words of Mandodhari. Mandodhari had once said to him, “You are underestimating the power and prowess of Sri Rama, Oh Ravana! Rama is no ordinary human. He is verily the incarnation of Lord Narayana. Would it be possible for anyone to build a bridge across the ocean with the help of mere monkeys? You have abducted Sita, the paragon of chastity and virtue. It is not too late. Go to Rama. Return Sita to Him, and seek His forgiveness.” Ravana had re-

torted at that time, “I may lose my life, but I will not seek Rama’s forgiveness.”

On the seventh day of the battle, Rama launched the *kantastra* which He had received from Indra, and beheaded all the ten heads of Ravana. The great demon collapsed and fell.

Service to God: the vehicle for liberation

The ten heads of Ravana signify the four *Vedas* and six *Sastras*. Though Ravana had mastered all these texts, he could not benefit from them. Practice is more important than mere mastery of the texts. A speaker who spoke earlier related to you how Hanuman advised Vibhishana. Hanuman, while searching for Sita in Lanka, heard in the corner of a palace the chanting of Rama Nama. He immediately went into the room from which the sound of Rama Nama came. On entering, he found Vibhishana and exchanged pleasantries, for both of them were devotees of Rama. Vibhishana said to Hanuman, “Oh Hanuman, though you met Rama just a few months ago, you have advanced very high in the realm of the Spirit. And you are enjoying the sweet proximity of Rama. But I have been chanting Rama Nama for so many years; yet, Rama has not showered His Grace on me. I have not had the *darshan* of Rama even once.

To this Hanuman replied, “Oh Vibhishana, it is not that you ought to participate in the mission of Rama and serve his cause to obtain the full benefit of chanting Rama Nama. You must not only perform penance and do *japa* and meditation, but you must

also participate in *seva*. Service is the very boat of life. It is not enough if you see a fruit. Your stomach will not be filled merely by looking at the fruit. You must eat the fruit and digest it.

There are three steps that lead to transformation: *jnatum*, *drashtum*, *praveshtum*. *Jnatum* means to experience. Consider a book. First you must know about the book. Then you should acquire it. Finally, you must read it; only then will you enjoy the book. Similarly, it is no use if you simply repeat the name of God. You have to translate the *Ramasmarnam* into actual life. Ravana mastered the *Vedas* but did not practice even a single word of it. The entire Lanka used to reverberate with the chanting of *Vedas*. Many demons were well versed in *Vedas* and used to recite them. But these people did not practice even an iota of what they repeated. Though all the *Sastras* proclaim HELP EVER HURT NEVER, Ravana did not practice the teaching.

Practice more important than scholarship

Man has many extraordinary powers at his disposal but he is not able to realise them. The reason for this is that man is dominated by the worldly tendencies. He spends his time from morning to night merely in seeking out a living.

*From dawn to dusk without any rest,
A struggle to fill your belly.
You are wasting your life in useless learning
And frivolous pursuits.*

*What have you gained, oh man, in this scramble,
Ignoring the lotus-eyed Lord?
Think deeply on this, oh man.*

The world today is marked by unrighteousness, and we are defiling our time by indulging in falsehood. When we contaminate our mind with untruth, our life also becomes untruthful. Our sight, learning, and deeds also will be untruthful. What is in the mind comes out through eyes, ears, tongue, and deeds. What is inside alone can come outside. You must fasten yourself firmly to the scriptural commandment: *sathyam vada*. When you give your word to do a thing, you MUST do it. Failure on your part to do it is tantamount to falsehood. Such an act is not only untruthful but betrayal and deceitful too.

The second scriptural commandment is: *dharma-m chara* (practice *dharma*). Many people say they do not know what is *dharma* and what is *adharmam*. Swayed by self-interest and selfishness, man performs activities as he likes. Though he knows what to do and what not to do, he pretends as though he does not know anything. Though you have been listening to many good things, how many of them have you practised?

*Will darkness be extinguished by hearing about the
lamp?
Will a patient be relieved of his disease by hearing
about the power of medicine?
Will a poor man's poverty vanish by hearing about
the power of money?*

Unless we practice what we learn, we cannot gain much in this world. The world will not improve, unless man practices good things in life. Who is a man? Man is one who has a mind. What is mind? It is a bundle of thoughts. Our tendencies spring from our thoughts. We will be worthy of the name “man” only when we drive away evil thoughts.

*What is the use of our higher learning?
Who can erase fate’s writings on the forehead?
When evil thoughts arise in the mind,
Man becomes blunt and useless.*

Did Ravana gain anything by mastering the sixty-four disciplines? Learning should lead to wisdom. But the educational system today merely prepares the students for a job. Man is the architect of his own misfortune. When Ravana collapsed on the battlefield, Mandodhari, his Queen, went to the dead body and lamented, “Oh Ravana! What has happened to all your learning now? I was telling you very often to mend your ways. It is shameful for a great emperor like you to be troubled and tortured at the hands of monkeys. However, I am happy that you have died by Rama’s hands.” Vibhishana came at that juncture to see Ravana’s body. At first, Mandodhari started scolding Vibhishana. Then, realising her mistake she said, “Oh Vibhishana, there is no use in scolding you. Very often, you counseled your brother well, but your advice did not enter his head.”

When the head is empty, anything can be filled in it?

*How can one fill a head that is already filled with
stuff and nonsense?*

*Unless the dross in the head is drained away, how
can one fill it with pure feelings?*

Mandodhari wanted to run to Sita and seek her forgiveness. She then said to herself, "I ought to have gone to Sita a long time back, what is the use of my going to her now?"

Nip evil in the bud

Ravana died. It was a piteous scene. Men and women were weeping over the dead, and the women who were widowed were weeping over the corpses of their husbands. Likewise, the children who were orphaned in the battlefield were weeping over the bodies of their parents. Grief was writ large on the faces of everybody in Lanka. What was the cause for all this? It was Ravana's lust that was the cause for the calamity that befell Lanka. Even a single fly is enough to bring a catastrophe. A whole potful of milk turns into poison if you mix in it even a drop of poison. Although there were good people in his kingdom, Ravana contaminated it totally by his venomous behaviour. Even a small flaw can be fatal. The ants may be small, but they can kill a big serpent.

Similarly, the mistake may be minor, but it can be disastrous. The seed may be small, but it has the potentiality of growing into a gigantic tree. The seed has the capacity to grow into a tree, to yield fruits and thorns as well. Hence, caution should be exercised to sow only a seed that yields fruits and not thorns. Simi-

larly, a flaw should be eliminated in the initial stage itself, since it is difficult to exterminate it when it assumes gigantic proportions. That is why the Upanishads laid down: *Tasmai namah karman*—salutations to the work. Why should we salute *karma*? We should make our actions pure, sacred and pleasing to the Lord. The *Vedas* also laid down that all work must be performed only for the pleasure of the Lord. Actions performed for the pleasure of the Lord will protect us one day or the other.

Perform good actions only

Speak the truth and perform good action. If you cannot speak the truth throughout the day, at least set apart a certain period during which you will compulsorily practice truth. We live in the *Kali* age, which has the potentiality to compel even noble souls to tell a lie! What is the cause for this? Evil company. It is said, “Tell me your company and I shall tell you what you are.” You beget the qualities of the company in which you move.

Good company causes detachment, and detachment causes non-delusion.

Non-delusion causes steadiness, and steadiness leads to Liberation.

You must always cultivate good company and severely shun bad company. Run away from bad company at any cost. Once you become aware that you are developing a bad quality, you must give up that bad quality immediately. One should not commit sin, when one is aware that it is a sin. This was the fatal flaw of

Ravana. He committed sin, with the full knowledge of it. Action, if performed innocently, is not a sin.

Tell your mind, “Oh Mind! Contemplate on the name of Rama in full awareness of it. The same substance can be used for mundane as well as sublime purposes. A boulder can be used as a stepping stone, as a building block, and also for carving an idol. The stepping stone is used for walking, the stone block for building a mansion, and the idol for worship. The stone is the same but is used for different purposes.

Students! Adopt excellent behaviour, whether in the *mandir*, school, college, or hostel. Students should behave so well that everybody is impressed.

For mind, mind is the testimony.
For body, virtue is the testimony.
For stupid, stupidity is the testimony.
For everyone, Swami is the testimony.

No evil accrues if good actions are performed. Therefore, go on performing only good actions. That kind of behaviour lends value to human life. A real man is one who has humanness in him. As soon as you get up in the morning, say to yourself, “I am a human, not an animal or demon.”

Today, the entire world is steeped in untruth and unrighteousness, causing endless *asanthi* (want of peace). Truth and righteousness lead to *santhi*, whereas untruth and unrighteousness cause *asanthi*. The combination of the brown betel, green leaf, and

white lime gives rise to the red colour. The new colour arises due to the mixture of the three ingredients. Truth is purity, and *dharma* is selflessness; the combination of the two leads to peace in the human heart. It is by this harmonious combination that *santhi* can be harvested in the human heart. *Sathya* and *dharma* are like the two wings of the bird; they are like two wheels of the cycle. It is not possible to ride a cycle with only one wheel. Ravana, instead of upholding *sathya* and *dharma*, followed and upheld only *asathya* and *adharma*. That is why his life was wrecked.

Both Rama and Ravana were scholars. While Rama mastered only thirty-two disciplines of learning, Ravana had mastered sixty-four disciplines. The difference between Rama and Ravana lies in their practice. While Rama practised whatever He learnt, Ravana did not practice even an iota of what he had learnt, resulting in distortions in his personality.

Inner significance of the *Ramayana*

The *Ramayana* is not a mere compilation of incidents, like the abduction of Sita, the fury of Rama, the death of Ravana, etc. This is not the real *Ramayana*. We must understand the spiritual undertone of the *Ramayana*. Who was Dasaratha? He was not merely the Emperor of the Kosala Kingdom. Dasaratha signifies the chariot of the human body, which has five organs of action and five organs of perception. Ayodhya is not a mere city, the capital of Kosala. Ayodhya signifies the impregnable fortress, i.e. the heart. The capital is in the centre surrounded by the ten organs. The three wives—Kausalya, Sumithra, and Kaikeyi—signify the

serene, (*sathwic*), dull (*tamasic*), and passionate (*rajasic*) respectively. The three Queens signifying three attributes gave birth to Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrughna, who symbolised righteousness (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), desire (*kama*), and liberation (*moksha*). *Dharma* seeks *prajnana*. Rama, who is the embodiment of *dharma*, married Sita, who was the embodiment of *prajnana*. Rama, accompanied by Sita (*prajnana*), went into the forest of ignorance (*ajnana*). There, Ravana the embodiment of evil (*durnaya*) stole Sita. This then led to Rama coming into contact with Sugriva, the embodiment of discrimination (*viveka*) and Vali, the embodiment of indiscriminate (*aviveka*). Rama befriended *viveka* (discrimination), and killed indiscriminate.

Since He had to cross the ocean of *samsara* (worldly attachments) He took the help of Hanuman, the embodiment of courage (*dairya*). After crossing the ocean of *samsara*, He came face to face with Vibhishana, Ravana and Kumbhakarna, who were the embodiments of the serene, the passionate, and the dull temperaments respectively. *Dharma* destroyed *tamas* (Kumbhakarna) and *rajas* (Ravana) and crowned *sathwa* (Vibhishana). After crowning the *sathwic* temperament, He got back Sita, the embodiment of *anubhavagnana* (experienced knowledge). *Prajnana* was ultimately transformed into *anubhavagnana*. The transformation of *prajnana* into *anubhavagnana* is real wisdom. One has to grow through trials and tribulations to achieve true education.

Since, we are in the world of *pravritti*, even a *sathwic* person can change into a *rajasic* person. Since Vibhishana (*sathwic*) was in the company of Ravana (*rajasic*) and Kumbhakarna (*tamasic*), he had to lament a lot. Vibhishana waited and waited for the hour of God. At last, that hour arrived, and he was crowned by God Himself. Ramakrishna Paramahansa also waited for a long time for God with unbearable agony. It was his intense yearning and agony, which lifted Ramakrishna to his sublime nature. He waited for the vision of Mother Kali until night, and when the night was about to pass, he lamented sadly "Oh! this day is also wasted, without seeing Mother." Though in the same city of Calcutta there lived great intellectuals like Aravinda Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal, it is the name of Ramakrishna that is more remembered in the hearts of people today. It is the intense faith of Ramakrishna in Divinity that earned for him an immortal place in the hearts of people. It was the unshakeable faith of Ramakrishna that lifted him to lofty heights. Since Ravana had no faith (*Atma vish-wasa*), he plunged into abysmal depths. Even his *tapas* (penance) turned into *tamas* (dullness). *Tapas* should strengthen one's faith, but this did not happen in the case of Ravana.

The *Ramayana* unfolds the conflict and the clash between truth and untruth, justice and injustice, righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil. This is an eternal clash, which rages continually in the human heart. Blessed is the one who transcends this clash and scores eternal victory. When such victory is achieved, *Ramarajya* will dawn on earth.

