

10. Sita, The Embodiment Of Purity

I am neither the merit nor the sin, neither the pleasure nor pain.

I am not the holy hymn, nor the fruits of pilgrimage, charity, and sacrifices.

I am neither the food nor the body formed out of the essence of the food.

*I am the embodiment of Sath-chith-ananda—
Truth, Beauty and Auspiciousness.*

Fear of sin has disappeared and atrocious acts are on the ascent.

Devotion towards God has dwindled and has been replaced by evil activities.

Rare indeed it is to come across someone chanting the name of the Saviour of the pious.

O mind! Chant the name of God and derive endless peace.

Students, Embodiments of Love,

Man has been taken over by an overpowering desire to investigate and conquer Nature. To this end, he has relied upon his physical prowess, intellectual capacity, power of position, and strength of sheer numbers. What has he achieved in the process? Without God's grace and support, he cannot taste even an iota of success. It is only when God condescends that a person can attain victory in any issue. Nature is not any-

one's property. It belongs to God alone. Hence, only by first attaining God's Grace can it be conquered.

Prakruthi and Paramatma

Nature is not merely a conglomeration of the five elements, nor is it an assortment of the five life principles, or the five sheaths, or the five senses. Nature is the very Embodiment of Divinity. Man is making every effort to dominate beautiful Nature. Plato described Nature as truth, goodness, and beauty. Alexander, the disciple of Aristotle, also propounded the same truth to the world. However, wherefrom have this beauty and elegance come? God is Beauty! Hence, Nature also is beautiful. God is reflected in Nature. In trying to overcome Nature without the permission of God, man experiences failure and hardship. In turn, this leads to troubles, obstacles, and sorrows. This truth is propounded in the *Ramayana*.

Ravana defied Lord Rama and tried to acquire Sita. Who can hope to win over Nature, which is God's property? It is an exhibition of ignorance to dream of winning over Nature. None can obtain success in this task. What was Ravana's situation at the end? He was the cause for the total destruction of his family, brothers, sons and the kingdom itself. Hence, prior to acquiring Nature, one must secure God's Grace. If the Nature is the body, God is the soul residing in it. A body without soul is of no use. The body has value only as long as the soul remains in it. Whenever there is any ailment in any part of the body, is it able to set it right by itself. Not at all! God controls all the three —the doer, the task, and the action as well. Amongst His many

names, God is also called as the One who bestows the fruits of actions. You are merely performing the task assigned, but it is God who is presenting you with the results of the action. Fools who do not recognise this truth conjure up dreams of winning over Nature. They think that their physical, intellectual, and scientific prowess is sufficient to achieve this task.

Yama and Rama

Hiranya Kashyapa was a great scientist. Aeons ago, he succeeded in obtaining some control over all the five elements. Nevertheless, he failed to secure total mastery over Nature. His son Prahlada told him, “You might have conquered all the worlds, but you have not been able to conquer your own senses.” It means that if you are unable to control your mind, of what use is your achievement? Only when you quell the mind can you win over Nature. And the prerequisite is to realise the Lord and be the recipient of His Grace. He is the Master and the One who bestows. He allows Himself to be captured easily by his devotees. To those who entertain negative feelings in them, He appears as an enemy. Purandharadasa sang, “O Rama! To Vibhishana who believed in You, You appeared as God. But to Ravana who defied You, You became the very lord of death, Yama. You are not only Rama but You are Yama as well. There is no Yama other than You in this world. You appear as Rama to those who love You. To those who oppose You, You appear as Yama. To Prahlada, who prayed to You at all times and under all circumstances, You appeared as Lord Narayana. But to Hiranya Kashyapa who opposed You, You appeared as death.”

Hence, He is the Lord as well as the god of death. To Kamsa, who, without a trace of compassion for his sister, was prepared to kill her, Krishna appeared as Yama. To Ugrasena, the pious father of Kamsa, He appeared as the Lord Himself. Hence, good and bad are both decided by our own feelings.

A devotee must constantly be chanting the name of the Lord. Devotion has no fixed limits. At all times and under all situations, the Lord must be remembered. In this age of *Kali*, people have started making distinctions between tasks that are theirs and those that are for God! They think that doing meditation, contemplation of the Lord, and performing rituals of worship are all tasks to be performed for God, whereas all household chores, business, jobs, agriculture, and other such tasks are believed to have no connection with God. This kind of division obstructs man from realising Divinity. Devotion implies that which sees no divisions. Hence, there are no dominions like 'yours and mine.' This is because in this body there is only one God, residing as the life-force.

Praanopasana

This has been called *praanopasana* by the sages of yore, which means worshipping God constantly, irrespective of your activities. You must have seen that when police officers go on duty, they put on their uniforms befitting their ranks. But when they go off duty, they come back home and wear their own clothes. Similarly, when devotees go on pilgrimage to such Badrinath, Kedarnath, Amarnath, Manasa Sarovar, and

such other places, they put on a dress called devotion. Upon their return from the pilgrimage, they forget devotion and revert to the worldly view; thoughts related to the household enter into their minds. This is not devotion. Devotion is the constant contemplation of the Lord at all times, places, and circumstances. Every effort must be made to experience and enjoy the bountiful joy of devotion with the help of this physical body.

*In this heart reside both the human and the
Divine;
Both play with each other and separate
themselves;
But there is a Director who directs this play.
In the same dummy are placed both evil
and good.*

God is One. Though there may exist good and bad, it is God alone who is in both of these. If Divinity is to be comprehended, it is the principle of the heart that must first be understood. Only then will Nature be ours. Is it possible to control our habits, feelings, and senses? It is. Krishna declared, "You are My own aspect, My son! You are not someone far separated from Me. I am in you and you are in Me." Today, man is seized with the urge for travel and the desire to see many places. To whichever place he may or may not go, it is inevitable that at some point he must visit the city of death. A fish cannot survive even for a moment without water, its place of residence. It is eager to go back into the water if taken out of it. However, man has forgotten his place of origin and is still living without a bother. What a shame it is, then, that man has

not the wisdom of even a fish! We must not forget our place of origin. That is the place of the *Atma*. That is the residence of God. Man must strive to understand this principle.

The *Vedas* have compared all the limbs of the Lord to the lotus. The face, hands, feet, eyes—these have all been compared to the lotus flower. Where is the lotus born? It is born in the mud and it stands in water. It cannot survive even a second without water or this mud. And yet, it does not allow either of them to enter into itself. Here lies an ideal for man. He is born in the mud of the cycle of rebirth. He floats on the water of life. He is allowing both this mud and water to enter into him and not making any effort to remain aloof like the lotus. Instead, he is developing intense attachments, which is wrong. Actions will have to continue but in the midst of these, the taste of Divinity latent in the human must be experienced. Though several have made the effort, none of them appear to have been successful. What is the reason? The answer is that God's Grace has not been prayed for.

*Man cries at birth and then again at the
time of death.
In between, he cries many times.
But has he ever cried for the practice of
Dharma, which is languishing.
Does he cry for God?*

These two are what we must cry for: the languishing of *dharmā*, and for God.

*Do you know why eyes have been given to you?
Is it to look at the sinful activities around you?
No! It is to satisfy yourself by looking long at the
resident of Kailasa (God).*

Why have these eyes been given? Is it to see everyone? Is it not enough if you examine yourself? Everything is there within you. This truth ought to be realised first.

The good tidings

After Ravana had been killed in the battle, Rama bade Hanuman to convey the glad tidings to Sita. Hanuman reached the Ashoka gardens in one mighty leap. He was eagerly awaiting the day when he could communicate such joyous news to Sita. Upon his arrival, he placed before Sita this news. Vibhishana followed Hanuman and said, "Mother! You must prepare yourself to see Rama. I shall get the aerial chariot ready for you." So saying, he left to make all arrangements. His spouse Sarama and daughters Trijata and Ajata made Sita wear various ornaments and decorated her. Sita was shedding tears. Though this was a happy moment, she recollected all the events of the past. She was looking forward to seeing Rama again and thought:

*I am being released from this prison and am going to see Rama with my eyes.
I am going to see Sri Rama with my eyes soon.
Lord Rama, who had wedded me, could not keep me with Him.*

It has been ten long months since we were separated.

I am now being released from this prison. I shall be seeing Rama again.

O my dear Lakshmana. How much I had derided you, virtuous one!

How deep must have those words hurt you, my son, that you had to leave me.

These thoughts made her feel very sad. At such a time, the news of Rama's victory came like a cool shower. She was struck dumb with joy and could not even speak to Hanuman. She could hardly move. She did not know what to do. She had been waiting eagerly for this good news for ten months. After having been decorated by Sarama and others, she was led into the aerial chariot. What was this chariot? It was the Pushpaka chariot. She had been abducted in that very vehicle. When she sat in it, she recollected the past events. In a moment, she was by Rama's side.

The ordeal

But, Rama did not even look at her. He said, "I cannot look at Sita. I have taken birth to redeem this world. I have to set an ideal to this world. People may point an accusing finger at Me for taking back Sita, who had spent ten months in Lanka. I cannot take her back without first putting her to a test." Sita was shattered. She looked at Hanuman and said, "Oh Hanuman! Had you conveyed this news to me, I would have gladly taken my life there itself. Why did I have to be brought here amidst these *vanaras* (monkeys) and *rakshasas* (demons) to be humiliated thus?"

Students, householders, elders, and youngsters must look at the ideal here. When Sita got down from the aerial chariot, Angada, Sugriva, and the others sat respectfully with bowed heads. But there were some amongst the monkeys who were of low character and they strained their necks to have a look at Sita. Rama then stated that the behaviour of Angada and the others is the character of the virtuous while that of the other *vanaras* is the character of the wicked. The former is the aspect of the human, while the latter is the aspect of the monkeys. What is the attribute of a human being? He bows his head in respect to the elders. Sita is the very incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi herself. She is the spouse of Sri Rama. She should not be looked at with open eyes. Even Lakshmana himself bowed his head. Though he had stayed with her for ten years, not once did he look at her face. It is the look that prompts the thought. Today, the vision is full of spite and venom. You must have heard many people say that they have been struck down with fever due to someone's evil eye. Hence, the vision must be under one's control.

Meanwhile, Rama sent word through Lakshmana to light a fire into which Sita was to jump. She was to be affirmed by the God of fire himself as a precondition for Him to take Sita back to Ayodhya. At these words, Lakshmana flared up. He had never spoken against Rama before. Now he said, "Rama! Have You gone mad? Has Your intelligence dwindled? What are You saying? You might have been affected by some fault, but there is none in that great lady Sita. She is a

highly chaste lady. She is an ideal for all women, and You are talking so degradingly about her! If this is what You had in your mind, why did she suffer for ten months? Have You considered that?"

Rama knew Lakshmana's heart and Lakshmana knew Rama's heart. Upon hearing Lakshmana's outburst, Rama replied, "Lakshmana, we are now living as ideal men. We have to set standards for men to follow. I know her greatness. But her goodness must be brought out. People say that so and so is a great man. But being good is far more important than being great. Hence I must prove to the world that she is a great lady, but more than that, she is a good lady." Sita meanwhile heard Rama's command. With tears flowing down her eyes, she went around the fire and prayed, "If I am indeed the embodiment of Truth, if at any time there has been no evil feelings in me, may this fire cool down. Except for Rama's name, at every point of time, I had no other thought or name in my mind. But then, when Ravana was taking me away from Chitrakoota, he had caught hold of me and put me on the chariot. What could I do to prevent him from touching me? Even then, I thought of only Rama. If You have decided to test me after all that, I shall obey Your command." So saying, she jumped into the pyre.

All the gods and goddesses appeared there. They were critical of Rama's action. They remonstrated with Him for knowing everything and yet doing such a foolish deed. But the fact was that Rama was totally satisfied with Sita's innocence. Otherwise, why would He subject himself to so many difficulties, give up food

and drink, come to Lanka and be injured by the Rakshasas? Once, after a battle with Indrajit, Rama's body was covered with blood. Lakshmana fainted unable to bear the sight. Such was the love that bound the two. Why would the two face so many obstacles together? Why would they have built the bridge across the ocean? Was it not for Sita? Rama knew Sita's purity. He said, "I may know your nature. But people are like crows that keep cawing about imaginary things."

Then Sita said, "Will the koel bird give up its lovely singing just because the crow would caw in between. O Rama! People may gossip like crows. But You are the koel. Why must You be wary of what the people say?" Everyone present supported Sita by saying, "She speaks the truth!" People never spot the defects within themselves, but the defects of others appear magnified to them. Rama was not like that. Rama had absolutely no faults within Himself. But He had to behave thus to set an ideal to the people. The lord of fire appeared when Sita jumped into the fire, and handing over Sita to Rama, said, "Sita is a lady of the highest chastity. She is the very embodiment of the Goddess Lakshmi (goddess of wealth). She possesses a heart which is spotless and free of all defects and blame." When the god of fire spoke thus, Rama accepted Sita.

Sita's compassion

Here, there is another story. When Hanuman went to Sita to convey the glad news, he said, "Mother! I have to convey glad tidings to you. But I must also seek your permission to carry out a task. These demons, who had troubled you so long, must also be

killed. I shall tear them to pieces. Pray, grant me permission to do so." Sita then said, "Son! There is nothing to blame them for. They have only been executing the command of their master. So, it is the fault of their master, not theirs."

She then narrated a story to Hanuman. A hunter once went shadowing a tiger. But it caught sight of him and started to chase him. The hunter ran and climbed up a tree. The tiger kept a patient vigil below while the hunter waited for it to move away. The hunter then looked up and saw a bear on the higher branches. The tiger addressed the bear, "O bear! This is my prey that I have been chasing for such a long distance. It has now climbed the tree. Send my prey down to me, so that I may feed on it. The bear then said, "O tiger! This tree is my residence. The hunter has sought shelter here as a guest. It is my bounden duty to protect him. Hence I cannot push him down." But the tiger still did not give up and leave. Soon, the bear fell asleep. The tiger then addressed the hunter, "O hunter! I am interested only in my meal. It does not matter if it is you or someone else. I shall spare you and let you go, provided you push down that sleeping bear to me. I shall eat him and then go my way." This hunter was infested with evil feelings. Out of sheer selfishness, and in order to save himself, he pushed down the sleeping bear. The poor bear, while tumbling down, managed to hold on to a branch and saved itself from death. This is the protection that good people are always given. The bear was a kind soul, and its goodness saved it. It is not good to repay kindness with harm. The bear slowly climbed back. The tiger then told the bear, "O bear!

Despite your having shown such kindness to this man, he has repaid it by harming you. He is one without any sense of gratitude, having forgotten the good done by you. Hence, it is wise to send him down.” Then the bear answered, “Son! Each man’s sin is his own, his merits are his own. He will reap the consequences. Doing good is my nature, doing bad is his nature. He will suffer for his sin. I shall reap the benefits of my goodness. I cannot push him down.”

Sita then continued, “Similarly, my nature is that of compassion. Hanuman, though they have put me to much trouble, I cannot wish to put them to death for that. Giving trouble is their nature. Suffering with tolerance is my nature. Hence, do not punish them.” Hanuman was thrilled on listening to this. In this world, there are several who have obtained kindness and yet repaid kindness with harm. Such people are demons. But he who returns good for harm is the very embodiment of Divinity.

After accepting Sita, Rama started back for Ayodhya. En route, they stopped at the hermitage of Sage Bharadwaja. They had halted there on their onward journey too. Sage Bharadwaja was very happy. He gave away all the weapons he had to Rama, and blessed that the coronation may take place soon.

By the time Rama approached Ayodhya, the fourteen years were just about to conclude. True to his vow that he would immolate himself if Rama did not return within the stipulated time, Bharatha was ready to give up his life. Since Rama had halted at Bharad-

waja's hermitage, He was delayed a little. Bharatha lit a pyre. He was getting ready to jump into it. Just then, Rama sent Hanuman with a message. The wind is much faster than aircraft. Hanuman was therefore assigned the task of conveying to Bharatha the news that Rama was on His way. Bharatha became joyous, and eagerly awaited Rama's arrival, keeping everything ready.

Bharatha's supreme devotion

Here, two facts must be pondered upon. Bharatha was a devotee par excellence, while Lakshmana was a dependable and faithful servant of Rama. Lakshmana took into consideration the physical manifestation, while Bharatha looked at Divinity without any form. Without resting his eyes even once, Lakshmana took care to see that Rama and Sita were always comfortable. He did not know what sleep was for fourteen years! Such a great renunciate was he, a worshipper of the form of the Lord.

Bharatha, who on the other hand, was a worshipper of the formless God, stayed away from Ayodhya. He set up a small Hermitage at Nandigrama and constantly kept chanting the name of Rama. He focused his entire mind on Rama while Lakshmana was the one who had given up his body in Rama's service. This is the difference between them. Lakshmana prayed, "I am Your servant, to be used according to Your wish. I have no life other than this. I shall be Your sixth *praana*." Bharatha, on the other hand, prayed, "I do not have a body. I am entirely in You." With this thought, he constantly kept chanting the name of the

Lord. This is what is spoken of as '*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi*'—think of the Lord and the Lord you become. After constantly thinking of Rama for fourteen years, Bharatha too assumed the dark blue complexion of Rama.

Bharatha took the chariot and went to the banks of river Sarayu. He received Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana there, made them sit in the chariot, and drove to the city of Ayodhya. The residents of Ayodhya stared in astonishment, "Who was Rama and who was Bharatha?" Both looked to be Rama! Both were dressed in the garbs of an ascetic, their hair was matted and both were of similar complexion! The citizens, who had come to give a grand welcome to Rama, stood gaping! Everybody came forward to garland Bharatha, thinking he was Rama. Bharatha realised their predicament and pointing to Rama, directed them to garland Him. Only then did the citizens realise who was Rama and who was Bharatha. Bharatha and the other two brothers, were all aspects of the divine incarnation.

On arrival in Ayodhya, all of them had a ritualistic bath. Vasishta, Vamadeva, and the others brought all kinds of grains and jewelry. They were all taken and decorated with ornaments. Here, a miracle occurred. All the monkeys were transformed into human beings and came into the city riding on horses, elephants, and camels. Who is a *vanara* and who is a *nara*? He who has intelligence is man (*nara*). He who has stupidity is a *vanara*. A *vanara* is associated with

restlessness. *Nara* (man) is characterised by his steadiness.

The coronation took place. Numerous gifts were given away. Rama distributed hundreds of crores of gold coins to the Brahmins. Not one crore (ten million) but hundreds of crores! Lakhs (a hundred thousand) of cows were given away in charity. Bharatha could not contain his joy. He thought: "For whom should I keep my property? It is my good fortune that Rama has come; that is more than enough for me. I shall give all of this away in charity." So thinking, he too indulged himself in giving away various items in charity.

Hanuman, the supreme devotee

In the hall, all the vassal kings and allies sat on one side, and the ministers sat on the other side. The sages and hermits were seated in another enclosure. Rama's sense of honour and respect were impeccable. He bowed humbly toward the sages, indicating His humility. He saw the kings and gave them a smile—that was His gift bestowed upon them. He then saw the citizens and raising His hands, blessed them. He saw some ladies as well and gave a short nod of His head. In this way, He showed His respect to everyone in different ways. On that day, He handed over to Sita an exquisite pearl necklace that could be valued at several crores. He told her, "You can give away this necklace to whomever you like. I know that you like Me. But I would like you to give this necklace to whomever you like in this congregation." Sita gave the necklace to Hanuman, who was pressing Rama's feet, and praised him thus, "You are the supreme devotee who faithfully

carried out every command of Rama. You are the one who strained so much to search for me.”

In this way, she praised Hanuman. But Hanuman was not listening to any of these praises. Instead, he was busy taking out each pearl from the necklace, keeping it near his ear, biting into it and then throwing it away. Rama saw this and asked Hanuman if his old habits had still not died. Hanuman replied, “Not at all, O Rama! I am constantly immersed in the feeling of Rama. I repeatedly chant the name of and hear the name of Rama. Amongst the nine paths of devotion, this is most important for me. That is why I have become Your servant. The nine types of devotion are *sra-vana* (listening), *keertana* (singing), *vishnusmarana* (contemplating), *padasevana* (pressing the Lord’s feet), *vandana* (offering obeisance), *archana* (worshipping), *dasya* (servitude), *sneha* (friendship) and *Atmanivedana* (offering oneself to the Lord). Hence, by qualifying to be Your servant, I have also become Your confidant. Without this servitude to You, I could not have become Your friend. After becoming Your friend, I am now offering myself to You. I do not like to listen to anything other than the name of Rama. Therefore, I am listening intently to see if the name of Rama is resounding in these pearls.”

In order to show to the world the great devotion of Hanuman, Rama said, “Foolish one, can there ever be Rama’s name resounding in the pearls?” Hanuman replied, “Even the pearl must have Your name in it. A pearl without Your name is as good as stone to me. Hence, I have thrown it away. My entire body vibrates with Your name, Oh lord Rama.” He then plucked out a

hair from his arm and kept it close to Rama's ear. Even that hair was chanting 'Ram, Ram'! Such was the great devotion of Hanuman. That is the reason why he could become such a close confidant and trusted friend of Rama. Anybody else may be far away, but Hanuman was never far away from Rama. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, Satrughna, and even Sita were, at some-time or the other, a little distant. But never was Hanuman away from Rama, even for an instant. What was the reason for this? It was the constant chanting of Rama's name and constant service of Rama that elevated Hanuman to lofty heights. He constantly served Rama with body, mind and soul.

Rama was very pleased with Hanuman. He got up from His throne and said, "Hanuman! What boon can I give you? Nothing would be a worthy enough gift for you. I shall hence give Myself to you." So saying, Rama embraced Hanuman. Hanuman lost himself in Bliss at this boon. This state is also called *nirvikalpa samadhi*. What is this *samadhi*? If we concentrate intently at an object for twelve seconds, it is called a *dharana*. Twelve such *dharanas* make one *dhyana*. Twelve such *dhyanas* make a *samadhi*. This is the relation among the three states of *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*. Hanuman was instantly in this state of *samadhi*.

The *Ramayana* is the holy text that has shown to the entire world the extraordinary and immense devotion of Hanuman.

