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Ramayana - The Divine Masterplan

*“That which fosters universal peace,
That which destroys all scope for mean thoughts,
That which encourages unity and cooperation,
Is real Education, this is the education a student
should acquire.”*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

THE Rama principle attracts everybody. Such a principle can be explained for days together and still cannot be expounded fully. If you keep hearing the song of the cuckoo it may tire you after sometime. If you keep drinking, even divine nectar may taste sour at some point of time. But the story of Rama can be read or heard any number of times and one would never feel satiated. He who sings, or reads or hears or gets to read this sacred story of Rama will find it highly nectarous. No one knows the origin of *Ramayana* or from when it was being sung in public.

However, based on certain evidences, scholars have made a few observations. The conversation that Ravana was having with Sita while abducting her, gives a hint of the age of the characters in the epic, in that era. Ravana told Sita, “My age is now 2000 years, your husband Rama is just 40 years of age and your own age is 39 years.”

The earth is endowed with several forms of energy. In between Akasha and the earth is permeated by a vast medium of energy field. The power of planet earth is unimaginable. Hence, earth is considered to be the storehouse of all energies. Predominant among the energies is the power of magnetism. Repeated investigations have failed to throw light on the nature of this energy.

Sita is the daughter of Goddess Earth – Bhoodevi. She is therefore also called Bhoojatha. At the time when Rama went to lift Lord Shiva’s bow, Bhoodevi rejoiced. The various kings and princes who had assembled were not of the right age for Sita. Their looks too were of no match to those of Sita. Rama alone looked extremely youthful. His physical features were beyond description. He was extremely handsome. Bhoodevi decided that Rama was the right match for Sita. She saw to it that there was no obstruction on Rama’s path to victory in the assembly. When Rama lifted Lord Shiva’s bow, he used his left hand as if to indicate that he

required just his left hand to accomplish something which others found impossible. This was actually the great strength of mother earth at work. She reduced the weight of the bow and enhanced Rama’s strength.

The wonderful powers of the earth are indescribable. However, all the minerals, metals and chemicals that are in the earth are present in man too. Energies like the electric, chemical, magnetic, etc., these and many more strengths are immanent in man. One cannot say how many, but every kind of energy and material in the core of earth are already in man. But, there is no realization in man regarding his great potential. The power of the divine in man is extremely sacred. Man is tremendously powerful because of this Divinity in him. He can do anything, if only he wills. Today, thanks to the influence of science, man has reached the moon. He has also brought back dust from the moon. Actually, these are all expressions of the inner strength of man. It is a pity that man cannot recognize his own strength. At present, everyone is asking the others, “Who are you?” Very few ask the question, “Who am I?” All your problems get solved when you inquire into this question. In the answer to this question is embedded the answer to all questions.

Mandodari, the Ideal Wife

While abducting Sita, Ravana was taking her across the ocean to Lanka. He was highly materialistic

and hence wanted to impress Sita with glimpses of his riches, power, opulence and acquisitions. With this intention he took Sita into the inner apartments of his palace. But Sita refrained from looking at any of these with utter disdain. Mandodari was very sad at the turn of events. She advised Ravana thus, “Oh! Lord! Why are you inviting your own doom? Rightly is it said that as the time of destruction approaches, discrimination departs (*Vinasakale viparita Buddhi*). Why did you have to bring here such a chaste and pious lady like Sita? This is our fate. You are not making attempts to understand the true nature of mother Sita. For that you need to know and control yourself first. She definitely cannot stay in the inner palace. Instead select a peaceful location and put her there.” Paying heed to Mandodari’s advice, he set up a small house in the *Asoka Vana* for Sita to live in peace. Mandodari is ranked as an ideal wife, because, like a minister who warns his king against danger, she gave timely advice to Ravana and made sincere attempts to dissuade him from going astray. She told him, “Lord! Instead of doing ‘*Ramachinta*’ (Thoughts about Lord Rama) you are doing ‘*Kamachinta*’ (indulging in lustful thoughts). From now on you will never face good times again. Your doom is approaching. This is the reason why you are entertaining such wicked, destructive thoughts. You should never cause a woman weep and make her shed tears. If you do so, for every tear that she sheds, you will have to shed a thousand. Never hurt a

woman.” Thus Mandodari tried her best to make Ravana realize his folly.

One day, Mandodari herself went to Sita. She implored, “O daughter of Mother earth! Accept my salutations. You are a chaste and noble lady. You are highly sacred and pure. My husband is an evil man. His evil deeds are dragging him to his destruction. It is said that

“*With good feelings, man enjoys happiness;
With evil feelings, he himself becomes evil.*”

(Telugu Poem)

His bad intentions are making him evil. Please forgive him and save me from widowhood.” This episode of Mandodari pleading with Sita is not chronicled in any prevalent version of the *Ramayana*. Meanwhile, Sita was totally lost in Rama’s contemplation. Mandodari’s pleas or Ravana’s threats did not even register in her mind.

Sita in Lanka

At such a time, what was the situation in Lanka? Just like the situation today, people were highly agitated. There was a strange sense of uneasiness and unrest amongst the citizens. They suppressed their sufferings in their hearts and would not express them freely for fear of persecution by Ravana. Meanwhile, Vibhishana’s wife Sarama took upon herself the task of serving Sita.

She had several conversations with Sita and tried to give her strength. She said, “Mother! I am indeed fortunate to serve such a holy person like you. Your pure character alone can lend some peace to Lanka. Ravana is no ordinary king. He is exceptionally wicked and it is our misfortune that you have fallen into his clutch.” Sarama did her best to thus console Sita and lift her spirits.

One night Trijata, daughter of Sarama had a foreboding dream. The dream vividly showed Lanka as being totally dry and arid. It showed all the trees as having withered and fallen. The royal palace was seen reduced to ruins and Ravana was staggering about without even water to drink. She understood that what she foresaw to be Ravana’s fate was a direct consequence of his own wicked deeds. At the same time, she was helpless and could do nothing but feeling sad.

Meanwhile Ravana appeared at the *Asoka* gardens. He visited Sita everyday to announce the countdown to the number of days left for her to accept him. Sita would remain oblivious to all such threats. One day, Sarama approached Sita, fell at her feet and prayed, “Mother! This has been a unique good fortune that I have had. My daughter also has been blessed by this opportunity. My husband is a person of sound character. He is also a devotee of Rama. He has surrendered himself to Rama

at the seashore. I am thrilled that our entire family has had this unique opportunity of being at Rama’s service.” Sita felt a little consoled when she heard this from Sarama; She realized that she had someone she could trust, near her.

Hanuman in Search of Sita

At that moment, Hanuman entered the scene. He had been searching for Sita all over Lanka. He was constantly censuring himself at the predicament he was in. To find Sita, he was forced to look amongst and at the ladies. He hence entered the inner apartments of the palace. He could feel the evil vibrations from the cruel demonesses who inhabited the rooms. Their actions were most grotesque. Hanuman scolded himself, “Alas! What a sin I am committing! Are these the scenes I am expected to see? These eyes must see the Divine form of Lord Rama and not such ugly scenes. Yet, I am forced to do so if I must succeed in finding Sita. I must not allow these situations to upset me.” So strengthening his resolve, Hanuman climbed over the walls of the inner chambers and continued his search.

At the time when Hanuman was captured and brought before Ravana, an interesting conversation took place between the two. Ravana was holding court in a gigantic hall of the palace. Ravana looked at the captive Hanuman and asked, “You are a monkey. You have destroyed the entire gardens. Who has sent you here, O

foolish fellow?” Hanuman was no ordinary being! He replied using the same harsh language, “Foolish fellow! The same hero who chopped off the ears and nose of your sister has sent me here!” Ravana was angry at this. He threatened Hanuman, “You impudent fellow! No king has dared address me in such derogatory terms! Watch your tongue, or I shall silence it forever!”. Hanuman shot back, “Maybe none has dared to demean you like this. I am Rama’s servant and I will definitely talk to you in this tone for you deserve nothing better!” This was the conversation between Hanuman and Ravana. Ravana had already got the news of Hanuman visiting Sita and the exchange of messages between the two. When Hanuman set fire to Lanka and went back, Ravana started worrying that Rama would definitely arrive, anytime from then. He considered the possible defeat at Rama’s hands. These were the effects of his own guilty conscience! It led him to hallucinate all such scenarios and did not give him a moment’s peace!

We shall now go back to Hanuman’s search for Sita. Hanuman was on the rooftop of the inner apartments and from a distance, he espied the tall trees of *Asoka Vana*. He leapt and reached the gardens. And there under a tree, he finally saw the forlorn form of Mother Sita. Her sorrow was obvious. Hanuman climbed the tree under which She sat and started singing the glory of Dasaratha’s son from the beginning. Sita was perplexed and looked up in astonishment. She

wondered, “Who is this monkey?” Hanuman was a total stranger to her. As an answer to her enquiring look, Hanuman respectfully folded his palms and said, “Mother! I am a servant of Lord Rama. I am here to serve your lotus feet.” Hanuman’s response did not have any effect on Sita. She did not acknowledge his presence or his explanations. It was her bitter experience that the demons assumed a variety of forms and were masters in creating illusions. She suspected that Hanuman too was a part of such a ploy.

Hanuman jumped down from the tree. Constantly chanting the name of Rama, he addressed Sita, “Mother! Here is proof of my identity.” He then handed over to Sita the ring given by Rama to him. Sita respectfully pressed the ring to her eyes. She told Hanuman, “Hanuman, how lucky you are! Did Rama Himself give you this ring? This was a gift to my Lord from King Janaka at the time of my wedding. Where is Rama now? How is he?” She eagerly enquired about the Lord in this way. Hanuman gave her courage by saying, “Mother! Be brave, he is coming shortly. He shall definitely come and take you back with him. You must not worry. If you are anxious, please sit on my back. With a single leap I shall take you to Rama immediately.” Sita smiled and said, “Hanuman, if I was to sit on your back and go back to Rama, you would be accused of committing the same sin of abduction as Ravana. I do not want you to get such a bad name. Rama himself

must come. He must kill Ravana and release me from this prison. Till then I shall wait and put up with this torture. Kindly carry this news to my Lord Rama.” With great reluctance and grief, she gave permission for Hanuman to leave. Hanuman could not bear to see the sadness in Sita. He decided to teach the demons a lesson and proceeded to lay to utter waste, the beautiful *Asoka* gardens. He was finally captured and brought before Ravana. Hanuman accused Ravana of being a sinner and a wicked king. He told that it was the misfortune of the citizens of Lanka to have him as their king. If the ruler was so wicked, he wondered, what could be said about the ruled? Hanuman poured scorn on Ravana thus.

Hanuman Returns to Report

Later, when he reached Rama he conveyed the good news to him. Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and all other *vanaras* were waiting eagerly on the seashore. Hanuman landed in front of them. He was greeted with congratulations and benedictions of victory from the ecstatic battalions of *vanaras*. They praised Hanuman and said, “Hanuman! It is by such timely, helpful and sacred spirit of service to Rama that you have won his heart. You have indeed brought good news. May all auspiciousness greet Rama from now on.”

Before Hanuman took leave of Sita, She gave him her crown jewel. This was one among several that were

presented to her by Anasuya. Rama was aware of this jewel. The moment Hanuman handed it over to Rama, Rama was both joyful and agonized. He heard the news that Sita was safe. This gladdened his heart. Hanuman explained to Rama everything that had occurred in Lanka.

“Oh! Sri Rama, listen to my prayers!

Accept the sacred jewel Sita has sent for you

I have seen Sita shivering like a parrot in a cage

Surrounded she is by a number of fierce demonesses

Oh! How they scare her by their threats and weapons

Poor mother can only bow her head in fear and anguish.

Oh! Sri Rama, listen to my prayers!

Firstly, there is Indrajit

Then comes the commander in chief Prahasta

The vast courtyards, the palatial bungalows

The big markets and the dazzling orchids

I have seen them all!

Oh! Rama listen to my prayers!” (Telugu Song)

In this way Hanuman described in great detail everything that he had seen in Lanka. Hearing about

Sita's plight, Lakshmana immediately grabbed his bow and arrows. He urged his brother to get up and act immediately. He said, "This is not the time to rest even for a moment. Let us proceed immediately and put an end to Mother Sita's plight and bring her back safely." Rama calmly replied, "Peace, peace, peace! One should not act in haste. Without proper enquiry, investigations and planning any action can only produce negative results. Let us therefore proceed cautiously." Sugriva sent instructions to his friends and kinsmen to mobilize a huge army. He instructed that the army enter Lanka, destroy Ravana and return only then.

The Vanara Army Invades Lanka

With such enthusiasm and vigour, the *vanara* army comprising experienced heroes like Sugriva, Hanuman, Jambavanta and others soon reached the shores of Lanka. The entire city was panic-stricken. The *vanara* army was all over the countryside around Lanka. They were on the hills, on the treetops, on the plains and everywhere! The monkeys were strangers to the Lankans till they saw Hanuman. The memory of the destruction that Hanuman caused during his previous visit was all too fresh in their minds. They were wondering among themselves.

"Oh! Wherefrom has this terrible monkey come?

Who has sent this messenger of destruction to Lanka?

*Our houses are in ruins, our families are homeless
All the houses are on fire, oh! Where are we to take
shelter?*

*We hear he is Rama's messenger come to see Sita
He is contented with the cooling vision of Sita*

But his anger has heated up our Lanka!

Oh! What destruction! What a calamity!

Our city lies in ruins, thanks to the monkey!

Oh! Wherefrom has this terrible monkey come?

Ravana will face certain ruin

He has abducted chaste and pious Sita,

If the messenger be so strong

Oh! What can one say of the master!" (Telugu Song)

In this way, the citizens of Lanka were terror-stricken. The monkey which had caused tremendous destruction earlier had now reappeared with more of its kind! Ravana's ministers, courtiers and allies were at a loss as to what to do.

How did the *Vanara* army cross the ocean? The mighty Hanuman could do it, but what about the entire army? Rama propitiated the God of Ocean with an arrow. The deity responded and facilitated the crossing.

The *Vanaras* were raising war cries against the demons. Ravana could not stand the noise. A fierce battle was imminent. Ravana was sure to meet his end in

the war. This was also the popular sentiment of the citizens of Lanka. They all wondered, “Why is it that this wicked person is keen to meet his doom? He is aiming to burn to ashes not just himself but his entire kingdom as well”. Everybody was thus criticizing Ravana within themselves. None of them entertained any pleasant feelings for Ravana.

War commenced. It was a fierce pitched battle. Indrajit, the son of Ravana, who had defeated Indra himself, entered the battle. He was the eldest son of Ravana. It was the second day of the battle. He was geared splendidly in the battle-attire. He was killed by Lakshmana in a fierce battle. Then came another mighty Rakshasa, whom the *Vanaras* mistook to be Ravana himself. He caused a great deal of havoc and destruction in their ranks. There was none in the army equal to him in might and valour. Vibhishana approached Rama and explained, “Rama! You must kill him somehow. If you kill him, it is as good as striking at Ravana himself. He is a mighty support for Ravana’s army. If you hit his thumb, he is sure to fall”. And so it was done as told. The mighty warrior fell. Vibhishana was observed wiping his tears. Lakshmana was surprised. He asked Vibhishana, “So many have died in the battle. But why do you weep for this one alone?” Vibhishana replied, “Lord! He was my only son. It is because of paternal attachment that I weep. But in truth, it was vital that he

be removed from the scene. Ravana’s arrogance was primarily based on his might. There are several more such heroes on whom Ravana depends”. In this way, Vibhishana gave Rama a brief account of several warriors in Ravana’s army. Gradually Ravana started losing each one of his celebrated generals.

Ravana Killed

Finally, Ravana himself came to the battlefield. Deep within himself he was worried; but he hid it and fought. As each of his head was knocked off, another took its place. It was proving to be impossible to vanquish Ravana. It was once again Vibhishana who revealed to Rama the secret of Ravana’s invincibility and directed where the arrow had to be shot. He said, “Rama! There is no sin in betraying such a wicked person. His death is highly beneficial for the world. I do not aspire for or desire to rule the kingdom of Lanka. But this evil Ravana must be killed.” Rama followed Vibhishana’s directions and shot his arrow. Ravana fell on the battlefield.

Mandodari came running and wailed in agony, “Lord! I had warned you several times not to meddle with chaste and pious married women. I told you not to cast lustful eyes on spiritually accomplished women. You are now reaping the consequence of your sins. You have accumulated plenty of vices. I tried to dissuade you. But you would never pay me any attention.” It is rightly said,

“*Good advice is never accepted
Though given with a good heart.
Evil counsel is immensely attractive to the ears
How will such people ever realize Me?*” (Telugu Poem)

Of what use is one’s accomplishment if one does not listen to good advice? He is bound to be ruined. Ravana too could not escape this fate and he paid for it with his life.

The Fire Ordeal

The *vanaras* rejoiced at Ravana’s fall. They too had lost a several of their own members. Sita was being brought to Rama. Strangely, Rama would not raise his head to look at Sita. Sita was highly anxious and eager to catch a glimpse of Rama. She had been away from her husband for 10 months and wanted to see him at once. But, Rama did not seem to show any interest. Instead, he ordered Lakshmana to light a fire for Sita to prove her chastity. It was Rama’s intention that Sita pass through the fire and prove to the world that She was blemishless, sacred, and pure. It was only after this proof that Rama was willing to accept her. Rama knew about Sita’s purity – but he was concerned that the world may spread rumours about her character. If Sita were to prove herself with a trial by fire, none would dare open his mouth. Sita saluted Rama, circumambulated the fire thrice and hurled herself into it. The Fire God appeared.

He proclaimed, “Rama! Sita is blameless. She is a spiritually enlightened, sacred and virtuous lady. There is no need for you to test her further. I am withdrawing and extinguishing myself.” Thus Sita was brought to Rama. The monkeys were all agog to catch a glimpse of mother Sita and fell one over the other in total disarray in their eagerness to see Sita. Rama accepted Sita as his own.

Back to Ayodhya

Meanwhile Vibhishana brought the aerial vehicle – *Pushpaka Vimana* and put it at Rama’s disposal. This vehicle belonged to Kubera, the stepbrother of Ravana. Ravana had vanquished him in battle and usurped it. Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Vibhishana, Sugriva and all others boarded the vehicle and proceeded to fly towards Ayodhya.

At the same time, Bharatha was eagerly awaiting Rama’s arrival. The dead line Rama had given him for his reaching Ayodhya was over that day. He was distraught with anxiety as to whether Rama would return or not. He had a chariot kept ready to receive Rama and take him to Ayodhya. Shortly, to his great joy he saw *Pushpaka Vimana* approaching in the sky. The citizens of Ayodhya were overjoyed. Their hearts were dry without seeing Rama for fourteen long years. The state of the women was beyond description. They had spent fourteen years in great despair. They were unable to

relish their food. They had all become almost skeletons in appearance. They had spent their time chanting Rama's name and consoling themselves.

Meanwhile, Shatrughna arrived from Ayodhya with garlands for his brothers and sister-in-law. The *Pushpaka Vimana* landed and everyone alighted from it. And then a wonder occurred. Everyone was astonished to see that Bharatha and Rama looked identical! This wonder was witnessed by one and all. Since Bharatha had spent every moment of the fourteen years in constant contemplation of Rama, he had acquired Rama's features and attributes. Shatrughna wanted to garland Rama, but could not identify who was Rama among the two. As everyone was wondering, Lakshmana came to Shatrughna's rescue. Rama was garlanded and one garland was presented to Sita. The entire group moved in a procession towards Ayodhya.

Jubilant Ayodhya

At Ayodhya, there was gaiety and happiness all around. Functions were organized everyday. The populace was extremely happy to get Rama back after fourteen years. This was all due to the power of his Mother's blessings. Kausalya blessed Rama, "Son! May you pass the fourteen long years like you spent just fourteen minutes. No obstacle will come in your way because you are the incarnation of Lord Narayana. None

can trouble You. You will definitely reach Ayodhya safe and sound." She lovingly embraced Rama on his return.

It was now Sumitra's turn. She is a good friend to all. Her virtues cannot be easily described. She too was thrilled at the victorious return of Rama. She was confident all through that none could harm Rama or cause Him an iota of trouble for the simple reason that no such person could be born. She brought her daughter-in-law Urmila to Lakshmana. It was fourteen years since Lakshmana and Urmila had seen each other. She fell at her husband's feet and said, "Lord! It was your total dedication to Rama that has saved and protected you so far. You would always think of Rama. It was that sacred name that guarded and guided you." She was overjoyed and applied vermilion to Lakshmana's feet, as was the custom in those days. Sumitra praised her that it was her good wishes and blessings that had kept her son Lakshmana safe and secure.

Kaikeyi too arrived on the scene. She was not wicked, as is commonly depicted. She was fully aware of the purpose of Rama's incarnation. The house of Dasaratha was indeed fortunate to have four gems of sons and four equally virtuous daughters-in-law. Sumitra gathered the four couples together, blessed them contently and retired from the scene. She told Rama, "I had spent fourteen years of my life thinking only of you.

It was my cherished desire that I see you after fourteen years. I have seen you now and sanctified myself. My life's purpose is served." There was nothing else she wanted from life and she soon died peacefully.

Kaikeyi too was highly contended and at peace with herself. She was subjected to malignant attacks. But she did not heed any attention to them. She was fully aware of the mission that Rama was to undertake. At the time Rama was very young, she was teaching him archery. Rama had then already cautioned her, "Mother! I have incarnated to put an end to the demons. You must chalk out a plan to fulfil this mission." This is the reason that Kaikeyi went on to ask the two seemingly heartless boons from Dasaratha. She pretended to succumb to Manthara's wicked promptings and asked Dasaratha to banish Rama. All that was now past. Rama had returned victorious and everybody was singing praises of his glory. She too passed away, contented with her role in the masterplan. Ayodhya was decked in all frenzy and rejoiced at the return of Lord Rama.

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