

Chapter XIII. The Ramayana in the Heart of Man

Devotee: Swami, last time you spoke of the *Mahabharatha* war; in the same manner, does the *Ramayana* also happen in everyone's heart?

Swami: Undoubtedly! It takes place systematically and in the same sequence.

Devotee: Then, in what form does Rama come in this?

Swami: The *Atma* is Rama. He has come, in the character of the soul (*jivi*), wearing the dress called body.

Devotee: Then, being one whose will prevails, and being omnipotent and all powerful, why does He suffer so much?

Swami: It is all play, His sport (*leela*). What can be joy for Him? And what can be suffering for Him? He is the embodiment of bliss (*ananda-swarupa*), who knows neither. By His will, He can produce everything. He enacted the *Ramayana* on the stage of the theatre of the world, with Himself taking a role and showing each quality (*guna*) as a separate form. Such a *Ramayana* is taking place, in every heart. The Rama in the heart (the *Atmarama*) is observing everything, as witness.

Devotee: But the inert material (*jada*), and the individual soul (*jivi*), how does they enter into this *Ramayana*?

Swami: This inert material accepts the active consciousness (*chaithanya*), viz. the knowledge of *Brahman*. This consciousness is born with the name of Sita. The inert-matter-consciousness become One. This is referred to as *Sita-rama*. As long as the inert matter and the consciousness are One, there is no trouble and no suffering. It is the separation of one of these two that gives rise to all the bother.

Devotee: How is that, Swami?

Swami: Sita, who is knowledge of *Brahman*, goes away from the *Atma*, which is in the form of the individual soul. Hence, falling into the darkness or jungle is inevitable. Rama has acted in this way to show us this; if Sita, or knowledge of *Brahman*, is allowed to be lost, one cannot escape wandering about in the jungle of darkness.

Devotee: Swami, then why is Lakshmana always with Him? What does he stand for in our life?

Swami: One should not be alone in the dark jungle of life; one should have the mind (*manas*), ever by one's side. It is for this that Lakshmana is kept near, always.

Devotee: In the *Ramayana*, Vali and Sugriva are described. Who are they?

Swami: When wandering in the dark jungle one gets despair when one should get discrimination. They have vengeful hatred of each other. Vali, who is despair, has to be destroyed; only then can success come. Despair is Vali; discrimination is Sugriva.

Devotee: Hanuman, who appears between these two, who is he?

Swami: He who is of great help in the conquest of despair, viz. courage! That is Hanuman; He is courage. When associated with courage, it is possible to cross the ocean of illusion; that is why Rama built the bridge with the help of Hanuman.

Devotee: After crossing the ocean of illusion, what is to be planned?

Swami: Don't you know what Rama did after crossing the bridge? Conquering illusion (*moha*), He slew the

qualities of passion and inertia (*rajoguna* and *thamoguna*) in the form of Ravana and Kumbhakarna. The remaining brother, the last, the quality of purity (*sathwa-guna*), viz. Vibhishana, was crowned king. The three qualities (*gunas*) have been illustrated in the characters and careers of the three brothers Ravana, Kumbhakarna, and Vibhishana.

Devotee: After this, what has to be achieved?

Swami: Has to be achieved, do you say? Next is the attainment of self-experience (*anubhava-jnana*), or Sita—the spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) reached after experience, wisdom realised in actual life. When both inert matter (*jada*) and consciousness (*chaithanya*) unite again, that is the coronation—that is to say, salvation (*jivan-mukthi*) for the individual soul (*jiva*). Therefore, the fundamental teaching of the *Ramayana* is this:

The soul (*jiva*), mind (*manas*), spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), despair, discrimination, courage, delusion, passion (*rajas*), sloth (*thamas*), and purity (*sathwa*) – these demonstrate themselves each in a different form. It is to be learned how and in what ways each of these can be either acquired or subdued.

All this is done by the *Atma*, who has come in the form and with the name of Rama, by His acting, behaving, directing, and guiding. So, the *Ramayana* didn't end long ago. As long as in each life there is a struggle for achievement through these paths, and people attain the self knowledge (*anubhava-jnana*) in the end and the quality of purity (*sathwa-guna*) is crowned at last—until then, the *Ramayana* will continue to take place in the heart of people. On one side, the *Mahabharatha* war, on the other, the *Ramayana*; and on another, the *Bhagavatha*; thus is life led perpetually. These are the subtle (*sukshma*) forms of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharatha*, and the *Bhagavatha*. Do you understand?

Devotee: That means that in the *Ramayana* of actual life, *Atma* is Rama, mind (*manas*) is Lakshmana, and Self-knowledge (*anubhava-jnana*) is Sita. And when that Sita is lost, Rama falls into the forest of existence. There, in that forest, are despair and discrimination; if we associate ourselves with courage (Hanuman), we can go across the sea of delusion with the army of zest, strength, and steadfastness represented by Jambavan, Angada, and other monkeys (*vanaras*). As soon as we cross the sea, we can destroy the passionate (*rajasic*) and slothful (*thamasic*) qualities, symbolised by Ravana and Kumbhakarna, and the pure (*sathwic*) quality or Vibhishana can then be crowned, self-knowledge (*anubhava-jnana*) or Sita is attained. This union of inert matter (*jada*) and consciousness (*chaithanya*), that is, of Sita and Rama, is the bliss (*ananda*), the salvation (*jivan-mukthi*) for the soul. Ah! What a splendid *Ramayana*! The *Ramayana* accomplished as the son of Dasaratha is being enacted now as the subtle *Ramayana*, through qualities (*gunas*) and senses (*indriyas*) in each individual so to say.

Swami: There is no “so to say” in this. It is happening as the subtle *Ramayana*!

Devotee: Swami, You said that each quality and each sense adopts a separate form in the *Ramayana*. It causes some surprise to imagine that the senses also put on some form! In these, the gross and the subtle *Ramayanas*, in what form do the senses appear? Please tell me this.

Swami: Whatever the quality, how can it express itself without the help of the senses? Qualities are bred in the senses. The senses of action are five; the senses of knowledge are five. These ten, with the help of the mind (*manas*), create attachment, don't they? Otherwise, there can be no merging at all. “Born in illusion (*maya*), bred in illusion, man's mission is to master illusion,” it is said. So too, born in the senses, bred in the senses, the inert consciousness (*jada-chaithanya*) has to master the senses. That is their basic duty, don't you know? Do you know

where Rama, the soul (*jivi*), was born? Whose son is He? Dasaratha has that name because he symbolises the ten senses (*dasendriyas*). Whichever quality (*guna*) or form (*rupa*) we consider, it cannot be unrelated to the ten senses of action and of knowledge, (the *karmen-driyas* and *jnanen-driyas*), in the form of Dasaratha.

Devotee: Four sons were born of Dasaratha. Of what were they the forms, Swami?

Swami: From the ten senses, not only four but any number of qualities and forms can originate. But only the chief, the four symbolising the four faces of the Lord, originated by His will. They are born as Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrughna. In the subtle form, they are truth (*sathya*), *dharma*, peace (*santhi*), and love (*prema*). These are the Four Faces of the Lord.

Devotee: Who among these, Swami, is truth? Who represents *dharma*, peace, and love?

Swami: Can't you discover? Rama is truth. "The status and the honour should go to him who has the right, not to me," said Bharatha when he was offered the crown, so he is *dharma*. He placed complete faith in the *Atma*, that is, Rama, believing that there is no bliss (*ananda*) sweeter than its uninterrupted company,

Lakshmana followed Rama, so he is love. Having no individual separate ambition of his own, treading the paths followed by these three, Satrughna was calm and unperturbed, so he is peace. Is that clear?

Devotee: Yes, Swami, but these four were born of three mothers; who are whose mothers?

Swami: As I said just now, "born in illusion (*maya*), bred in illusion, one has to transcend this illusion." So also, one is born from qualities (*gunas*), one is brought up with qualities, and finally one has to transcend the qualities. The three mothers represent three qualities! Among them, Kausalya is the pure quality (*sathwa-guna*); Kaikeyi, the passionate quality (*rajoguna*); and Sumitra, the slothful quality (*thamoguna*); they play those roles, in the epic. Dasaratha in the form of the ten senses (*dasendriyas*) is associated with these qualities, so he is the embodiment of the sense-qualities. It is only because people can't easily grasp the truth through the senses and the qualities that the Lord taught them through the *Ramayana*. The Lord is teaching this even to this day. The Lord performed that day the gross *Ramayana*; and today, He is performing the subtle (*sukshma*) *Ramayana* on the stage of the hearts of people.