

10. True nature of Raama

DHARMA (virtue) is not a matter of time and space, to be modified and adjusted to the needs and pressures of the moment. It means a number of fundamental principles that should guide mankind, in its progress towards inner harmony and outer peace. When man strays away from *Dharma*, he meets with greater harm than even physical slavery. There is a dread now about invasion and bondage to the enemy if you are not alert enough and united enough. But the loss of *Dharma* is an even greater calamity, for what is life worth if man cannot live up to the talents he is endowed with?

These principles are called *Sanaathana* (Eternal), because their origins are not dated, their author is not identifiable; they are the revelations made in the clarified intellects of impartial sages.

They are basic and eternal. They do not represent temporary vagaries. India stood unshaken and undaunted against the onslaught of attitudes that were bred in other lands to suit the needs of limited societies, because she stuck to the *Dharma* that was laid down for all time and all men. Indian rulers also respected the rigours of *Dharma* and took the advice of the repositories of *Dharma* and the interpreters of *Dharma*, those who were purified in the crucible of *thapas*. They recognised the Ruler of Rulers, and sought His guidance by prayer and penance. They knew that their *Prabhu* (Master) was *Sarvaantharyaamin* (the Eternal Indweller or Onlooker). They were taught that He was in full sympathy, not only with the king but even with the lowliest of his subjects. Therefore, the rulers of this land were warned to care for the happiness and cure the misery of every single individual in the State.

The Divine is an indivisible entity

Dharma is the code of conduct which will promote the ideals of each stage of man---learner, householder, earner, master, servant, *saadhaka*, *sanyaasi*, etc. When the code is distorted and man undermines his earthly career, forgetting the high purpose for which he has come, the Lord incarnates and leads him along the correct path. That is to say, He comes as Man, to restore the principles and re-establish the practice of *Dharma*. This is what is referred to as *Dharmasamsthaapana* in the Geetha. Among these Forms assumed by the Lord, there is no higher or lower, though *Pandiths* may argue who is better or greater among, say, Raama or Krishna! That is but a type of intellectual gymnastics, which gives the *Pandiths* the keen joy of a pugilistic encounter! Veerabhadhra Shaasthry has posed a similar problem now. Let me tell you at the outset that the Divine is an indivisible entity, whatever Form it may assume, here or elsewhere.

Raama never deviated from *Dharma*

Raama appeared as *Maayaa-maanusha-ruupa* (illusory human form); He stuck to *Dharma* in daily practice, even from His infancy. He is the personification of *Dharma*. There is no trace of *adharma* (vice) in him. His Divine Nature is revealed in *shaantha guna* (calm temperament) and *karunaa rasa* (feeling of love and affection); meditate on Him and you are filled with *Prema* for all beings; dwell on His story and you find all the agitations of your minds quietening in perfect calm. When Thaataki, the female demon, had to be killed, He argued, hesitated and desisted, until Sage Vishwaamithra convinced Him that she had to be liberated from a curse by His own arrow. That is a sign of His *Karuna Rasa*.

Raama never provoked another in order to create a convenient excuse to destroy him; on the other hand, He gave the adversary every chance to be saved, He carried the message of *Dharma* to the *Vaanaraas* and the *Raakshasas*, as well as [o sages like Jaabaali. He accepted the homage of Vibheeshana without demur and He announced that He was prepared to accept even Raavana, if only he repented his iniquity. "*Sathyam vadha*" (speak the truth), says the *Shruthi*; Raama stuck to truth, in spite of all temptations. "*Dharmam chara*" (Practise virtue), says the *Shruthi*. He never deviated from the path. For example, He had, as you know, to live 14 years in the forest, to fulfil His father's behest. So during that period, He did not enter an inhabited town or village. He avoided Kishkindha and Lanka, even when the Coronations of Sugreeva and Vibheeshana took place. Vibheeshana pleaded with Him very plaintively, saying that only a few days remained out of the 14 years, but Raama sent Lakshmana instead. He did not waver or overstep. That was the strictness with which He kept the vow.

Make Raama your *Aathma Raama*

Raama is *Dharmaswaruupam* (Embodiment of Virtue); Krishna is *Premaswaruupam* (Embodiment of Love). Raama was ever aware of the obligations of *Dharma* When Dhasharatha, running after His chariot in mortal anguish, cried out, "Stop, stop" and called on Sumanthra to stop, Raama told him not to. He said, "If he chides you, tell him you did not hear him." Sumanthra was in a fix. How could He say something not true? But, Raama explained, "This order to stop the chariot comes from a grief-stricken father, whereas the order to take Me to the forest came from the King, whose minister you are. You should not hear the ravings of a man who has lost his reason through sorrow; you must listen only to the commands of the King."

Even before the advent of the *Avathaar*, the stage is set to the minutest detail; Kaikeyi is ready with her two indefinite boons, Dhasharatha is ready with the curse of the ascetic on his head, entailing upon him a death due to anguish at the separation of his son, the *Vaanaras* are ready to help the Divine Purpose. Seetha is ready risen from the earth, to provide the cause for the downfall of Evil. Just as a garland is made of flowers gathered from many plants, flowers of many hues and fragrances, so too the Garland of the Divine Story is made up of a variety of incidents, a boon, a blessing, a curse to provide the wonderful plot of His Story.

There are some who say that Raama shows man how to suffer! Well, if a king arranges a play in the palace and takes delight in enacting the role of a beggar, and acts it very realistically, do you therefore declare that he is suffering the miseries of beggary? Raama is *Aanandha* (Bliss). *Aanandha* is Raama. If it is not sweet, how can it be sugar? If Raama is suffering, He cannot be Raama. A ball of iron cannot burn the skin; but, make it red-hot; it does. That is but an assumed role. When the heat subsides it is as cool as ever.

Raama *Naama* (name) will save you, if you have at least the *Pithru Bhakthi* and *Maathru Bhakthi* (devotion to father and to mother) that Raama had. If not, *Raama Naama* is merely a movement of the lips. Meditate on the *Raama swaruupa* (Form of Raama) and the *Raama swabhaava* (the true nature of Raama), when you recite or write *Raama Naama*. That will give exercise to the mind and it will be made healthy and strong, in the spiritual sense. Make this *Dharmaswaruupa* your *Aathmaa Raama*, on this *Janmadhina* (birthday) of Raama. That is My advice anti My blessing.

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