

Mahabharata Tatparya Nirnaya

- **Introduction by Prof.K.T.Pandurangi**

Chapter-IV

Chapters 4 through 9 give a brief account of Sri Rama's story. All the major events of Sri Rama's story are narrated. While narrating some of the crucial events like Ahalya's episode, Manthara's episode, and Surpanakha's episode, the subtle issues of dharma and adharma are clarified. The relevance of these episodes is explained along with the main purpose of the theme. The background of the personalities concerned and the events are explained as well. Thus the objective of the narration of the different events of the story is not merely for the interest of the story but for the interest of the moral and spiritual aspects. Since the main events of Sri Rama's story are well known, I will highlight only the moral and the spiritual aspects that are brought out in this portion of the Tatparyanirnaya.

The first important event in Sri Rama's story is Vishvamitra's invitation to Sri Rama to protect the sacrifice he had undertaken from the demons. This indicates the main purpose of Sri Rama's incarnation viz., protecting the sages and other innocent persons from the onslaught of the demons. Sri Rama kills Tataka and Subahu and throws Mareecha into the sea. This very Tataka will be born as Putana in Krishnavatara. After the destruction of these and the completion of the sacrifice, Vishvamitra takes Sri Rama and Laxmana to the capital of the country of Videha. On the way, Ahalya is released from her curse by the touch of Sri Rama. Here are the instances of two women: one who was cruel and therefore destroyed and one who had suffered at the hands of Indra and Gautama and was released from her suffering. Gautama had indulged in excessive penance. This imbalance had to be cut down by provoking him. Therefore, Indra encroached upon Gautama's wife Ahalya. She was innocent but had become a victim of the circumstances. Hence, Sri Rama relieved her from her suffering.

atiriktaM tayo hartuM gautamasyAshrame rahaH |
surakAryaM surapatiH kurvan.h bhAryAM samaspR^ishat.h || (saN^.rA. I-6-18)

On arrival at Mithila, Sri Rama was informed of the condition for the marriage of Sita. He broke the bow of Shiva and married her. The marriage was celebrated in a befitting way. On his way to Ayodhya, Parashurama confronts him. Both Parashurama and Sri Rama were the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Therefore, there was no question of one defeating the other. However, a demon called Atula had found a place in Parashurama's navel. He was to be destroyed. His penance was also to be taken away. Therefore, Parashurama gave the Sharang Bow to Sri Rama and asked Him to kill Atula. Accordingly, Sri Rama killed him. Thus it was not a war between Parashurama and Sri Rama, but it was only to kill Atula that Sri Rama employed his bow. The fourth chapter narrates these Balakanda episodes.

The Ayodhya Kanda events are described in the first 16 verses of the fifth chapter. Dasharata decides to coronate Sri Rama. But under the advice of Manthara, Kaikeyi prevents it. Manthara was not an ordinary woman. It is well-known that as a result of the samudramathana, Goddess Laxmi was born from the sea. Out of the same samudramathana, the Alaxmi called Jyestha was

also born. She has been the wife of Kali. It was this Alaxmi alias Jyestha who was born as Manthara. Instigated by this Manthara, Kaikeyi asked for her two boons, viz. (i) Sri Rama be banished to the forest for 14 years and (ii) Bharata be installed on the throne. Kaikeyi asked for such cruel boons because a demoness called Nikrti was present in her.

According to these boons, Sri Rama proceeds to the forest. He first meets the Nishada King Guha. Being honored by him, he proceeds to Chitrakuta. In the meanwhile, Dasharata dies. Bharata arrives, and completing Pitrkarya, he proceeds to Chitrakuta to persuade Sri Rama to return. Sri Rama does not oblige him. Bharata returns to Ayodhya with the Padukas of Sri Rama and lives outside the city of Ayodhya in Nandigram.

After Sri Rama and Sita lived in Chitrakuta for some time, Indra's son Jayanta appeared in the form of a crow and injures Sita in the breast. He indulges in this cruel act because a demon called Kuranga was present in him. Sri Rama throws a grass blade at the eye of this crow and destroys one eye of all crows. Since then, crows have only one eye. Then Sri Rama entered Dandaka forest.

In Dandaka forest, a sage called Sharabhanga offered himself to fire in the presence of Sri Rama. He was very old and was unable to perform even his minimum rituals. Dharmashastra permits self-immolation for such aged persons.

anushhTAnAsamarthasya vAnaprasthasya jIryataH |
jalAnashanabhR^igvagnimahAprasthAnamishhyate || (Varaha Purana)

A person in Vanaprastha Ashrama who is not able to perform his minimum rituals to old age may take to self-immolation by drowning himself in water, observing a fast, falling from the peak of a mountain, or offering himself to fire. Accordingly, Sharabhanga performed self-immolation in the presence of Sri Rama. After this event, the demon Viradha confronts Sri Rama. He tries to kidnap Sita and carries Sri Rama and Laxmana on his shoulders. Sri Rama cuts his arms and throws him in a pit. His arms were cut because he had obtained a boon from Brahma that whoever is held by him in his arms cannot escape from it.