

Vibhishana Gita

From Ramayana Yuddha Kanda

The legend of Sri Rama is well-known. Ravana kidnaps Devi Sita during Vanavasa (living in forest). Sri Rama wages war against him with the help of Sugriva. Ravana loses all his great warriors and generals including his mighty brother Kumbhakarna and son Meghanada. He then himself comes for final battle with Sri Rama riding a Yuddha-ratha (war chariot), well protected by armour, and equipped with sophisticated weapons, while Sri Rama does not have a chariot, or armour or even shoes, except his bow and arrows. Seeing this contrast Vibhishana becomes very much concerned about the safety and victory of Sri Rama—and, out of extreme love and affection, expresses his doubt to Lord Sri Rama thus— "My Lord, you have no chariot, nor any protection either for your body (in the shape of armour) or for your feet (in the form of shoes). How then are you going to conquer this valorous and mighty Ravana?"

In reply Lord Sri Rama gives an enlightening sermon to Vibhishana. The whole scenario and discourse is narrated by Goswami Tulasidas in the following melodious Caupais and Dohas (Verses). Lord Sri Rama says— "My dear friend listen, the chariot which leads one to victory is totally different." The Lord then describes in detail the chariot—the Dharmaratha (the chariot of Dharma or righteousness) which gives everlasting victory in every situation of life. The Lord points out—"The wheels (Caka) of that chariot (Tehi Ratha) are valour (Sauraja) and fortitude (Dhiraja). Steadfastness (Drdhata) in truth (Satya) and good character (Sila) are its flag and banner (Dhvaja-pataka). The horses (Ghore) of that chariot are strength (Bala), discrimination (Viveka), self-control (Dama) and care for others (Parahita). Its reins are made of the ropes (Raju Jore) of forgiveness (Ksama), compassion (Krpa) and equanimity (Samata). Devotion to God (Isa Bhajanu) is the intelligent charioteer (Sarathi Sujana). Dispassion (Virati) is the shield (Carma) and contentment (Santosa) is the sword (Krpana). Charity (Dana) is the axe (Parasu), understanding (Buddhi) is the missile (Sakti Pracanda) and knowledge of the self (Vijnana) is the relentless bow (Kathina Kodanda).

Describing the armour and other weapons of the person riding Dharmaratha (chariot of righteousness) Sri Rama tells—A pure and steady (Amala Acala) mind (Mana) is like a quiver (Trona Samana), while quietude (Sama) and the various forms of abstinence (Yama) and religious observances (Niyama) are a sheaf of arrows (Silimukha Nana). Homage (Puja) to the Brahmins (Vipra) and one's own preceptor (Guru) is an impenetrable armour (Kavaca Abhedha). There is no other equipment (Upaya Na Duja) for victory (Vijaya) as efficacious as this (Ehi Sama). My friend (Sakha), he who owns such (Asa) a chariot (Ratha) of piety (Dharmamaya) has no enemy (Ripu) to conquer (Jitana) anywhere (Katahun). Concluding the sermon, Lord Sri Rama says—"Listen, O friend of resolute mind, a person who possesses this strong chariot (of Dharma) is a great hero, and can conquer even the mighty and invincible foe i.e., attachment to the world."

On hearing these words of wisdom Vibhishana clasps the lotus feet of Lord Sri Rama with joy and says—"O Rama, an embodiment of grace and bliss, through the metaphor of Dharmaratha (chariot of Dharma) you have given me valuable instructions and guidance for life."