

Danger of carrying weapons [an incident from Aranya Kanda of Ramayana]

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9th chapter of Aranya Kanda of Ramayana –Sita exhorting Rama regarding the danger of carrying bows and arrows while going for a quiet life in the forest to lead the life of an ascetic

For a long time I had a desire to pen down about the harm of collecting the armaments and weaponry by individuals or nations with a view to protect themselves in future, though at present they are at peace with all their neighbours, etc. Somehow it never happened. My ideas on this are based on a simple episode which comes in the original Valmiki Ramayana in the 9th Chapter of Aranya Kanda. The very way in which Sita politely but firmly and indirectly admonishes Rama, her husband for carrying a bow and arrows during his expected sojourn of fourteen years in wild forests, after eulogising Rama as an ideal man, husband and warrior, etc. is superb and it takes the sting away from her barbs.

When Rama and Lakshmana together with Sita leave after visiting a great saint called Suteekshna, in the wild forest of Dandaka, all of a sudden Sita addresses Rama, “Oh Rama,

to entertain worldly desires in the mind is extremely dangerous to oneself and three enemies are created by the sheer habit of desires, etc. namely:

- Adultery, i.e. enjoying others' wives
- Getting boundless anger without the base of enmity whatsoever
- And finally telling lies

To desire for other women makes the others slip from their Dharma or virtuous conduct besides one's own. Rama, this fault had never been with you even in your mind or in dreams. You never used to look at anybody else other than your own wife. You had never swerved from the path of Dharma and had never spoken in your life anything except the truth as you have already proved by abiding by your father's command. In you, my Lord, the entire code of a virtuous life [Dharma] and truth [Satya] are both established. All these things are possible only by one who has conquered all his senses. I know pretty well that you are one who has conquered thoroughly all your five senses and put them under your own control.

And now we come to the point of anger which can lead to violence towards others. This anger is only due to delusion without the basis of enmity. This is the only thing which now has come before us and threatening us. In order to fight with the demons of the Dandaka forest, and in order to protect the saint and sages over there, Lakshmana and you have come here along with your bow and arrows. On seeing this, my mind is perturbed and I do not like this carrying of bow and arrows. Suddenly seeing some of the animals of this jungle it may automatically induce you to send your arrows on them. The bow of Kshatriyas is like fuel to the fire. Here let me cite an episode of yore. There was a great saint in a forest who was performing austerities of the highest order. Lord Indra doubting his intention of the saint and suspecting that the austerities are meant for occupying Indra's post wanted to put impediments in the way of the continuance of austerities by the saint. He hit upon a plan of his own. One day, he came to that asrama of the saint disguised as an ordinary warrior along with a sword. He requested the sage to keep the sword in his custody till his return from travel and went away. The sage took his role as the protector of the sword very seriously and used to carry it along with him while going in the forest to pick up flowers for pooja, etc. One day, having developed the habit of carrying the sword, an automatic feeling of great anger as in the case of any warrior surged in him without any reason whatsoever, and he killed an innocent animal which came across his way. Doing such deeds, the sage ultimately reached the hell. So I advise you, my Lord that once you have come to a place of austerities as this jungle, please adhere to the code of virtuous conduct by abandoning this bow and arrows."

This is really a beautiful story which is perhaps more than 4000 years old. No doubt later on Rama convinces her about the wisdom of his carrying the bow. But that was an extremely exceptional case and it does not apply at all or anybody else. If a button, by pressing which

one can blow the entire world is given under the control of one man, it is a terrific temptation for the person to use it one day or other. It is a matter of psychology.

****Hari Om ****

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