Mandodari’s Lament and Ravana’s Cremation

Among the many consorts of Ravana who were wailing there, the senior most and dearest sat there in misery staring at her husband. Seeing that her husband had been slain by the unwearied Rama, Mandodari, stricken with anguish, said: “O younger brother of Kuvera, it is certain that even Indra is afraid to stand before you when you are angry. In fact, great sages, illustrious gandharvas and caranas fled in all directions out of fear of your. O king, how is it that you are not ashamed that you were defeated in combat by Rama, a mere human? How did a human inhabiting the forest kill you, who were undefeatable and enjoyed glory for having overcome all the three worlds with your prowess? It does not make sense that you who lived in a region devoid of humans and being capable of assuming any form at will should be destroyed by Rama in battle. Since you were fully armed on the frontline of battle, I do not believe your defeat by Rama was His doing. As soon as Rama slew your brother Khara at Janasthaana while surrounded by many rakshasas, it was obvious he was no human being. When by dint of his prowess Hanuman penetrated the city of Lanka, which was even difficult for the gods, we became very anxious. When the formidable monkeys constructed a bridge over the ocean, at that very time my heart doubted that Rama was a mortal. Or else, employing some inconceivable magic to kill you, death personified came in the form of Rama. Or else it was Indra who overcame you, O mighty one. But what ability did Indra even have to look at you on a battlefield, when you are most powerful, valorous, energetic and the enemy of the gods?

“Obviously He is the greatest of yogis, the eternal Super soul, the beginning, middle and final resting place, the greatest of the great, above all darkness, the maintainer, Lord Vishnu, who holds a conch shell, disc and club, whose chest is adorned with the mark of Shrivatsa, who is always fortunate and invincible, who is constant and firm, whose prowess is always successful, and who has assumed a human form. He is surrounded by all the gods who have assumed the form of monkeys. He is the lord of all the worlds who has descended for the welfare of the worlds. He has conquered you, the enemy of the gods, a source of fear, while you were surrounded by your rakshasas supporters. In the past, after conquering your senses, you conquered the three worlds. Remembering that enmity, your senses have now conquered you.
This result has come because you did not heed my advice when I told you not to strike up enmity with Rama. For no reason you became obsessed with Sita for the destruction of your sovereignty, as well as that of your body and people. You committed such an offence against Sita, who is worthy of respect. She is superior to Arundhati and Rohini in devotion to her husband, you fool! She is more forbearing than the earth and more gracious than Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune. By abducting through deceit the lovely Sita, whose every limb is faultless, while she was all alone in the forest, you have brought misfortune upon yourself and us. Having failed to realize your wish for union with Sita, you have surely been burnt by the asceticism of that woman so devoted to her husband. It was only because all the gods, including Agni, were terrified of you that you were not burnt to ashes the very moment you assaulted the shapely Sita. When the time has come, the doer certainly reaps the terrible result of his sinful deeds. Of this there is no doubt. The doer of good reaps a good result and the doer of sin reaps an evil one. While Vibhishana has achieved happiness, you have achieved such evil.

There are other young ladies much more beautiful than Sita in your harem. Fallen under the sway of Cupid, however, you did not recognize this because of infatuation. Death does not touch any living entity without a reason. Sita in particular is the reason for your death. You brought Sita from far away, though She would be the cause of your death. Free from sorrow, Sita will now enjoy with Rama. However, I, whose piety was meager, have fallen into a horrible ocean of sorrow. Enjoying with you on Mount Kailasa, Mount Mandara and Mount Meru, in Citraratha Garden, and in all of the gardens of the gods, I traveled about in your comfortable airship whose splendor was unequaled. Thus I visited different lands dressed in fine clothes and flower garlands. Because of your death I have been deprived of sense enjoyment. Although I am the same, I have become as if someone else. Cursed be the temporary fortune of kings!

Alas, O king, your face no longer shines as it did with its youthful eyebrows, fine skin, raised nose, reddish lips, sparkling earrings and crown shining like a mountain peak, although it used to vie with the moon, lotus and sun in radiance, beauty and sheen! Your eyes used to roll due to intoxication in the drinking halls. Your neck was adorned with different kinds of flower garlands. Your head was charming and illumined by a sweet smile when you spoke. Pierced by Rama’s arrows, it is red with dripping blood. Its fat and brains are scattered and it is covered with the dust raised by chariots.
“Alas! By my misfortune, I have reached the last stage of life which brings widowhood, something which I had never thought about before. I was very proud because the king of the danavas was my father, the lord of the rakshasas was my husband and the defeater of Indrajit was my son. My protectors were able to crush their proud enemies. They were cruel, famous for their strength and bravery and had no cause of fear, such was my firm belief. How did this unforeseen disaster befall you at the hands of a human being, when you had such powers, O bull among the rakshasas?

“Today your body, which was glossy like a blue sapphire and as large as a mountain, has been pierced by many arrows. It was adorned with armlets, necklaces of vaidurya gems and pearls, and also flower garlands. It looked more charming during pleasure pastimes and shone brightly on battlefields. It shone with its ornaments, like a cloud accompanied by lightning. It is very difficult for me to touch that body again and I cannot embrace it. With its inner flesh pierced with arrows, your body looks like a bristling porcupine. Its vital parts are completely pierced and its tendons are cut. Though swarthy, it is red with blood and is lying on the ground like a mountain shattered by a thunderbolt. Alas, this dream is actually real. How could you be killed by Rama?

“You were death for even death. How could you come under the sway of death? My husband enjoyed the three worlds and was a cause of great disturbance for them. He defeated the guardians of the world and lifted up Lord Shiva along with Mount Kailasa. He manifested his prowess by subduing the proud, tormenting the world and torturing the pious. On the strength of his might, he spoke boastfully before his enemies. He protected his own party and dependents and slay those who perpetrated terrible deeds. He annihilated thousands of danavas and yakshas. He subdued the nivatakavacas in battle, interrupted many sacrifices and protected his own people. He broke the laws of morality and employed magical weapons in combat. He kidnapped the virgin daughters of gods, demons and humans from here and there. He brought sorrow to the wives of his enemies and was the leader of his own people. He protected this island of Lanka and performed many terrible deeds. He gave us sense enjoyment and was the best chariot warrior. Seeing my husband endowed with such greatness, I am so stiff that despite being widowed, I maintain this body.
“Om Sri Lakshmi Narashimhan Nahama”

**Valmiki Ramayana – Yuddha Kanda – Chapter 111**

“Since you are accustomed to lying on opulent beds, O lord of the rakshasas, why are you sleeping here on the ground covered with dust? I was hard hit when my son Indrajit was killed by Lakshmana in an encounter. But today I am completely devastated. Deprived of my relatives, my protector and sense enjoyments, I shall grieve for endless years. O king, you have departed on a long and difficult journey. Take me with you. Stricken as I am with grief, I shall not survive without you. Why have you left me here in misery? I want to go with you. Why do you not talk to me, being miserable, bereaved and forlorn? Why are you not angry to see me come out of the city unveiled and on foot, my lord? O lover, just see your wives whose veils of shyness have fallen off! Why are you not angry to see them all come outside? This forlorn playmate of yours is lamenting. Why do you not comfort her or treat her with respect?

“O king, you have fallen under the sway of your enemy because you were cursed by those many ladies whom you widowed. They were noble women devoted to their husbands, dedicated to virtue, and engaged in the service of their superiors. They were afflicted with great grief. That curse invoked by those whom you mistreated has now come true. The saying “the tears of women dedicated to their husbands do not fall on the ground in vain” has prove true in your case. Indeed, when you had conquered the world by your might, how did you, who were so proud of your heroism, do such a dastardly thing as stealing someone else’s wife? Sidetracking Rama with the trick of a deer, and Lakshmana too, you kidnapped Sita. I do not ever remember seeing you display such cowardice on the battlefield! Due to a turn of fate, that cowardice that was seen in you while you were kidnapping Sita was surely an indication of your future adversity. My brother-in-law Vibhishana knows matters relating to the past and future and is conversant with the present. Seeing you abducting Sita, Vibhishana reflected and then sighed uncontrollably. He spoke the truth when he said: ‘The destruction of the rakshasa leaders is now imminent.” This great calamity sprung from desire and anger and accompanied by attachment which you perpetrated has destroyed your wealth. This great sin has destroyed our root. You who were famous for strength and valor do not deserve to be mourned by me, but because of my feminine nature, my mind is inclined toward pity. Taking merit and demerit, you have gone to your destination. I am just mourning for myself, stricken as I am with grief because of your death. You did not heed the entirely good advice of your friends and well-wishers, as well as of your brothers, O Ravana. You did not follow Vibhishana’s advice, which was logical, meaningful, beneficial, reassuring and in accordance with etiquette. Intoxicated by your strength, you did not heed the advice of Mariicha, Kumbhakarna or my father, Maya Daanava. This is the result of that.
“Om Sri Lakshmi Narashimhan Nahama”

Valmiki Ramayana – Yuddha Kanda – Chapter 111

“...You look very beautiful like a dark-blue cloud. You are wearing yellow silk garments and sparkling armlets. Why are you lying on the ground covered with blood with your limbs thrown out? Why do you not answer me when I am so sad, as if you were asleep. Why do you not answer me, when I am the granddaughter of a valiant, experienced sorcerer who never retreated from battle? Get up! Get up! Why are you lying down when freshly insulted? Already the sun’s rays have entered the city of Lanka today. That iron bludgeon which you used to crush your enemies in battle has been splintered into thousands of pieces by arrows. It was as brilliant as the sun. It was just like Lord Indra’s thunderbolt and you always used to worship it. It killed many enemies on the battleground and was adorned with a mesh of gold. Why are you lying on the battleground as if embracing a dear woman? And why do you not wish to reply to me, as if I were some unpleasant woman? Cursed be my heart which does not break into thousands of pieces since you passed away, even though grief-stricken!”

While lamenting in this way with her eyes shedding tears and her heart moistened with affection, Mandodari fell into a swoon. Overwhelmed with grief, she fell unconscious on Ravana’s chest. She shone like a flash of lightning on a rain cloud reddened by sunset. Lifting her up from there, her anguished co-wives, who were weeping uncontrollably, consoled her in the following way: “Our dear lady, do you not know that the situation of the worlds is not permanent? The wealth of kings becomes inconstant when there is a change in his situation. When their is a change in a king’s situation, his wealth becomes transitory.”

While being consoled in this way, Mandodari wailed loudly, bathing her breasts and spotless face with tears. In the meantime, Rama said to Vibhishana: “Let your brother’s funeral rites be performed and the womenfolk comforted.”

Then, after reflecting a moment, Vibhishana spoke the following humble and virtuous words: “Ravana rejected good conduct and vows. He was cruel, merciless and deceitful. I cannot perform the funeral rites for one who violated the wives of other men. Dedicated to all that was evil, he was my enemy in the guise of a brother. Ravana does not merit my respect, even though he deserves it due to seniority. People in this world will no doubt say that I am heartless, O Rama. But when they hear about all of his bad qualities, they will then say that I did well.”
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Rama, the foremost of those who uphold righteousness, was pleased to hear this. Being expert in speaking, Rama spoke the following words to Vibhishana: “I must do something good for you because it was with your help that I achieved victory. O lord of the rakshasas, I have to tell you what is proper. Of course this night-stalker was unrighteous and deceitful, but he was also always ardent, powerful and courageous in battles. It is said that even all the gods headed by Indra were unable to conquer him. Ravana was a great person endowed with strength, even though he made people wail. Hostilities end at death. We have accomplished our purpose. Let his funeral rites be performed. He is as much Mine as he is yours. He deserves to be cremated by you as soon as possible, out of duty and in accordance with the regulations. You will enjoy a good reputation.”

Hearing what Rama said, Vibhishana hurried. Thus he performed proper funeral rites for Ravana. In accordance with Vedic principles, they piled up sandalwood logs, Padraka wood and the fragrant ushira roots and covered the pyre with the hides of black antelopes. The king’s final rites were being performed in accordance with the Vedas. They performed Ravana’s obsequial rites very nicely. Constructing a sacrificial altar at the appropriate place to the south of the pyre, they consecrated a fire. Then they all poured a full ladle of clarified butter mixed with yogurt onto the pyre. They placed a small wooden cart on his feet and a mortar on his thighs. Putting in place all the wooden bowls and the upper and lower pieces of arani wood for igniting fires, they put a wooden pestle at its appropriate spot. In accordance with the scriptures and the directions of great sages, Ravana’s rakshasas sacrificed a goat there and afterwards spread over the king a sheet daubed with clarified butter. With forlorn faces, Vibhishana’s assistants covered Ravana’s body with perfumes, flower garlands and various pieces of cloth. They also poured parched grains over him as tears streamed down their faces.

Vibhishana lit the funeral pyre according to the rules. Afterwards, while wearing wet clothes from bathing, he offered water mixed with sesame seeds and Kusha grass to the spirit of his deceased brother. Consoling the ladies again and again, he requested them to return to the city, after which they all returned. When all the rakshasis had entered the city, Vibhishana approached Rama and stood humbly at His side. Having killed His enemy, Rama, along with His army, Sugreeva and Lakshmana, also felt elated, as Indra did after slaying Vritrasura.
Thus completes 111th Chapter of Yuddha Kanda of the glorious Ramayana of Valmiki, the work of a sage and the oldest epic.

Sriman Moola Rama Vijayate

References

