



Sri Rama's Most Precious Gift

The genius of Valmiki describes the most heart-felt joyous moment in Ramayana



Sundara Kanda ends with Hanuman narrating to Sri Rama his soothing assurance to Sita in Asoka vana that her husband, accompanied by Lakshmana, Sugriva and the *vanara sena* would soon arrive to defeat Ravana and take her back to celebrate the coronation of Sri Rama.

Valmiki's genius captures the touching episode at the very beginning of *Yuddha Kanda*. An overjoyed and overwhelmed Rama hails Hanuman's qualities of head and heart, and his role as Sugriva's emissary. He describes three categories of emissaries and how

Hanuman falls under the most distinguished category.

Rama says, "He who not only fulfills the task assigned to him but also performs other important functions helpful to his master belongs to the first *uttama* category. He who dutifully performs the task assigned to him belongs to the second *madhyama*, and one who fails in his mission to the lowest *adhama* category."

Rama adds, "Yayuputra has performed the task assigned to him with courage and imagination and, without ever belittling his own image, he displayed his own might, *bhakti* and *sakti*, that has given his master Sugriva immense joy. He has brought me and the valorous Lakshmana indescribable relief and happiness and protected the honour of our dynasty.

"That I cannot adequately honour him, especially in my present distressed condition, makes me feel more miserable. In this hour of relief and hope, the only gift I can give is all that I possess," so saying Sri Rama embraced Hanuman with ecstatic joy!

The Ultimate Gift

It was a spectacle for the gods to see Sri Rama and Hanuman caught in a blissful embrace, which Valmiki portrays so movingly. Portraits of that unforgettable occasion, drawn by famous artists, adorn the houses of the devout.

The *Yuddha Kanda* is strudded with episodes depicting Hanuman's valour. He carried mountains in his palm and Rama and Lakshmana on his shoulders. When Rama, Lakshmana and the entire *vanara sena* were helplessly lying on battleground, trapped by Indrajit's *brahmastra*, it was the wise old Jambavan who tells a worried Vibhishana that if Hanuman was alright, everyone would be saved.

At his coronation, Rama gives Sita a beautiful necklace asking her to give it to one who brought her the greatest joy. She, at once, offers it to Hanuman who felt humbled by it. *Yuddha Kanda* begins with Rama giving Hanuman his 'most precious gift' and ends with the divine couple presenting 'a doubly precious gift' - a place in their hearts!



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