

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

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भूमावनुपमः सूनुगुणैर्दशरथोपमः ॥ २-१-९

स च नित्यं प्रशान्तात्मा मृदुपूर्वं च भाषते । उच्यमानोऽपि परुषं नोत्तरं प्रतिपद्यते ॥ २-१-१०

कदाचिदुपकारेण कृतेनैकेन तुष्यति । न स्मरत्यपकाराणां शतमप्यात्मवत्तया ॥ २-१-११

bhūmāvanupamaḥ sūnurguṇairdaśarathopamaḥ ॥ 2-1-9

sa ca nityaṁ praśāntātmā mṛdupūrvam ca bhāṣate ।

ucyamāno'pi paruṣaṁ nottaraṁ pratipadyate ॥ 2-1-10

kadācidupakāreṇa kṛtenaikena tuṣyati ।

na smaratyapakārāṇāṁ śatamapyātmavattayā ॥ 2-1-11

All those years Dasharatha had no son, now he wanted to see Rama take command in his palace. It was right that Rama take the kingship. Dasharatha sent word to Vasishtha and the great ṛṣi agreed that the time was right. The royal court agreed it was the right time. The representatives of the people and the wise men in the society and the lesser kings in Dashartha's empire, kings who had enjoyed the benign and protective rule of Dasharatha, kings who never warred with each other nor stirred rebellion, were all called to assembly. Dasharatha broke the news, "You all know me. I have long been your ruler. I have tried to see that *dharma* is given the best place. I have always let my personal likes and dislikes serve the rule of law. But an ageing person is not the best ruler of a kingdom. Now my senses and judgment are not always under my control, because of age not because of lack of will. This old body and mind are not capable of what they were before. I want to choose a Prince Regent, and among these four sons I think Rama, son of my first queen, by right of seniority, should be the natural selection. But seniority should not be the sole criterion in the selection. Suppose the eldest were weak or incapacitated or angry or in some way lame or unjust. That person should not be chosen as the would-be king. You, the assembly, should voice your opinion openly. It should be the selection of all of us. I want your opinion. Then there will be no word against the selection. The deserving prince should be, without any favorit-

ism on my part, the choice of all. Please think it over and pitch in and be dispassionate; I am ready for retirement.”

Dasharatha thought that by order and virtue, Rama should be king. There is also a sense of a certain fortune that comes with a ruler. Whether there will be plague or drought, whether the people will suffer, is in the hands of the king. A citizen can be unlucky, but not a king. Dasharatha believed that where Rama went, Goddess Lakshmi would follow. Often the first child is favored, or the last. The middle one is forgotten. Though one's children are equally loved, the parent's mind runs in the groove of *samskāra* and considers only one possibility. Certain inhibition can prejudice a decision. King Dashartha asked those who were gathered to provide objectivity in the selection of the Prince Regent, the future emperor.

यद्यप्येषा मम प्रीतिर्हितमन्यदœ विचिन्त्यताम् । अन्या मद्यस्थचिन्ता तु विमर्दाभ्यधिकोदया ॥ २-२-१६
श्रुत्वैतदœ वचनं यन्मे राघवं पतिमिच्छथ । राजानः संशयोऽयं मे तदिदं ब्रूत तत्त्वतः ॥ २-२-२४
कथं न मयि धर्मेण पृथिवीमनुशासति । भवन्तो द्रष्टुमिच्छन्ति युवराजं महाबलम् ॥ २-२-२५

yadyapyeṣā mama prītirhitamanyad vicintyātām |
anyā madyasthacintā tu vimardābhyadhikodayā || 2-2-16
śrutvaitad vacanaṁ yanme rāghavaṁ patimicchatha |
rājānaḥ saṁśayo'yaṁ me tadidaṁ brūta tattvataḥ || 2-2-24
kathaṁ na mayi dharmeṇa pṛthivīmanuśāsati |
bhavanto draṣṭumicchanti yuvarājaṁ mahābalaṁ || 2-2-25

With one voice, and with their eyes dancing with joy as peacocks do when seeing the clouds, knowing from every perspective that Rama should become king, the assembly spoke their mind and let their love for Rama be known. Then King Dasharatha asked a mischievous question. He was not pleased with their selection process. “Why do you want Rama to be installed as king when I am your ruler? Why are you anxious to have him take my place when I have enjoyed a successful rule for all these years? What is wrong with me? Just because the emperor says something does not mean you have to take my word.” He just wanted to know their choice was clean.

The people replied, “It is a fact that you are old, and you do seem to favor Rama as Regent, but it is Rama who is qualified. He has the royal virtues in full. He is the right person. He is truth and he is committed to truth.” The words of praise and veneration and respect for Rama poured from their mouths in torrents.

Rama was a prince of royal demeanor, beautiful and straight, with a rich and pleasing voice, an able commander and leader, always respectful of the *brāhmaṇas* and others he met in his comings and goings, always with a kind word or question for those he met, a good listener with a sense of intimacy and kindness, humble yet powerful, well-versed in a number of *śāstras*, a master of weaponry and of the Kodanda bow, able to discipline anyone, cheerful and engaging, well-prepared and controlled, free of anger and rash judgment, thoughtful and consistent, firm and confident, never putting himself in a position where he had to withdraw his own words, and wise and energetic. He had endeared himself to everyone.

तमेवंगुणसम्पन्नं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् । लोकपालोपमं नाथमकामयत मेदिनी ॥ २-२-४८

*tamevaṅguṇasampannam rāmaṁ satyaparākramam |
lokapālopamaṁ nāthamakāmayata medinī || 2-2-48*

“Install Rama as the Prince Regent,” the *ṛṣis* agreed, saying the very Mother Earth herself wanted Rama to come and rule the kingdom.

“Whom else could we choose?” The people were unanimous, no dissension or objection at all. The assembly gave its sanction. Dasharatha got what he wanted. The proper date was researched and set.

नाम स्वं श्रावयन् रामो ववन्दे चरणौ पितुः । २-३-३३

nāma svaṁ śrāvayan rāmo vavande caraṇau pituḥ | 2-3-33

Dashartha sent for Rama, and the prince entered the assembly. Upright and regal, already he looked like a king. With naturalness and spontaneity he carried all his virtues. He showed no sign of complexes, neither self-consciousness nor false humility. I myself prefer a proud fellow to the falsely humble fellow. Rama did *namaskara* to all the people as he came into the assembly. He went straight to Dasharatha. Declaring his father’s name, stating the *gotra* to which he was born

and its main ṛṣis, declaring the sūtras and the veda the gotra followed, and giving his name, Rama prostrated at his father's feet. Rising, Rama looked over the crowd. He saw the kings from the east and the west, from the north and the south. There were people of the Vedic tradition, āryaḥ, and people from outside that tradition. There were mountain chieftains and rulers of the forest kingdoms. The entire empire was represented.

Rama was asked to sit and was addressed by his father, "Well, Rama, it is my desire to install you as the Prince Regent. This assembly, composed of wise and responsible people, agrees."

Rama replied, "Whatever you order, that will be done."

गुणवत्यपि तु स्नेहात् पुत्र वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् । भूयो विनयमास्थाय भव नित्यं जितेन्द्रियः ॥ २-३-४२
कामक्रोधसमुत्थानि त्यजस्व व्यसनानि च । परोक्षया वर्तमानो वृत्त्या प्रत्यक्षया तथा ॥ २-३-४३

guṇavatyapi tu snehāt putra vakśyāmi te hitam |

bhūyo vinayamāsthāya bhava nityam jitendriyaḥ || 2-3-42

kāmakrodhasamutthāni tyajasva vyasanāni ca |

parokśayā vartamāno vṛtṭyā pratyakśayā tathā || 2-3-43

Dasharatha said, "Your virtues are well-known to me; I do not think you need my advice. But, from my experience, let me share these two things with you. Number one, may you at all times remain vigilant and strong, because this office you will assume is an office of jealousy. The crown and the throne are large, and all the people will look up to you with envy. When you occupy the highest office in the kingdom, your humility should be that much more. Secondly, know that power corrupts, and one must be vigilant against it. Keep your passions, your personal pleasures, under control. The rigors of the canon that govern the behavior of a king are to be held. Your personal and your public life must conform to those rigors and rules. Never can misfortune or anger or lust, the things that twist other people, take hold of your heart and be a viable choice for you. Hunting is born of lust. Sleeping during the day is out. Playing dice should be only an occasional pastime. Slandering others is wrong. Womanizing will diminish you. Vanity and indulgence in popular music and dance is not for a king. Maintain your discipline.

To be continued...