

**Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa**  
**As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati**

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जगाम सहमारीचस्तस्याश्रमपदं तदा । तेन मायाविना दूरमपवाह्य नृपात्मजौ ॥ १-१-५२  
जहार भार्या रामस्य गृध्रं हत्वा जटायुषम् । गृध्रं च निहतं दृष्ट्वा हतां श्रुत्वा च मैथिलीम् ॥ १-१-५३  
राघवः शोकसंतप्तो विललापाकुलेन्द्रियः । ततस्तेनैव शोकेन गृध्रं दग्ध्वा जटायुषम् ॥ १-१-५४  
मार्गमाणो वने सीतां राक्षसं संददर्श ह । कबन्धं नाम रूपेण विकृतं घोरदर्शनम् ॥ १-१-५५  
तं निहत्य महाबाहुर्ददाह स्वर्गतश्च सः । स चास्य कथयामास शबरीं धर्मचारिणीम् ॥ १-१-५६  
श्रमणां धर्मनिपुणाभिगच्छेति राघव । सोऽभ्यगच्छन्महातेजाः शबरीम् शत्रुसूदनः ॥ १-१-५७  
शबर्या पूजितः सम्यग् रामो दशरथात्मजः । पम्पातीरे हनुमता सङ्गतो वानरेण ह ॥ १-१-५८

*jagāma sahamāricastasyāśramapadaṁ tadā |*  
*tena māyāvinā dūramapavāhya nṛpātmaḥjau || 1-1-52*  
*jahāra bhāryāṁ rāmasya gṛdhrāṁ hatvā jaṭāyusaṁ |*  
*gṛdhrāṁ ca nihataṁ dṛṣṭvā hṛtāṁ śrutvā ca maithilīm || 1-1-53*  
*rāghavaḥ śokasantapto vilalāpākulendriyaḥ |*  
*tatastenaiva śokena gṛdhrāṁ dagdhvā jaṭāyusaṁ || 1-1-54*  
*mārgamāṇo vane sītāṁ rākṣasaṁ sandadarśa ha |*  
*kabandhaṁ nāma rūpeṇa vikṛtaṁ ghoradarśanam || 1-1-55*  
*taṁ nihatya mahābāhurdadāha svargataśca saḥ |*  
*sa cāsya kathayāmāsa śabarīṁ dharmacāriṇīm || 1-1-56*  
*śramaṇāṁ dharmanipuṇāmabhiḡaccheti rāghava |*  
*so'bhyaḡacchanmahātejāḥ śabarīm śatrusūdanaḥ || 1-1-57*  
*śabaryā pūjitaḥ samyaḡ rāmo daśarathātmaḥjāḥ |*  
*pampātīre hanumatā saṅgato vānareṇa ha || 1-1-58*

*Māyāvinā*, by Marica's magic, the two sons of King Dasharatha were made to go a long distance. It was Rama's job to kill all the *rākṣasas*. Since Sita had been kidnapped, the Ramayana takes the prince on a journey out of the country. Without the kidnap, Rama would have just gone to the forest, killed *rākṣasas*, and returned. There would be no reason for him to go to Lanka. Ravana did this deed all for his own destruction.

Raghava, the one born in the family of Raghu, this Rama, along with Lakshmana, came upon the great eagle Jatayu, injured and dying. With his final

breaths, Jatayu told Rama his wife had been kidnapped, taken away by somebody. A demon had kidnapped Maithili, Sita, the princess of the Mithila kingdom. Jatayu said this and died.

Overpowered by sorrow, his mind and all his senses disturbed, Rama again began to cry out. Filled with sorrow and foreboding, Rama and Lakshmana had to take care of their duties. They cremated the body of Jatayu, one who died trying to save Sita. Then they again began to search for Sita.

Rama came upon another *rākṣasa*, Kavanda. Kavanda was a *rākṣasa* with a form peculiar even for *rākṣasas*. Most had large canines and bleary eyes and spiky hair *et cetera*. Kavanda had no head at all - he was all stomach. With his frightening presence, he would swallow anyone. Rama went after him, caught him and destroyed him. Then Rama performed the cremation rites for him also, allowing him to go to *svarga* and be released from the frightful *rākṣasa upādhi*. Before dying, Kavanda said a few things. He addressed Raghava, having fulfilled his *karma* to be killed by the hand of Rama. Stopping for a minute before he died, he told Rama, "Go and meet Shabari. By doing this you will have no further problems." Shabari was an old lady living in the forest, waiting for Rama to come. Kavanda knew that. "She lives as a *sannyāsī* there in the forest. She is a master of *dharma*, of right and wrong, and she lives by that *dharma*. She is a wise woman and a great devotee." Saying this, Kavanda went to *svarga*.

The brilliant Rama, the one who destroys enemies who deserve to be destroyed, searched for and found Shabari's hut. She had been waiting all these years for Rama. When he arrived, she was ecstatic and fell at Rama's feet. She gave Rama berries to eat. She had only berries. She bit each berry and tasted which were sweetest and gave only those to Rama. This of course is not heard of in the tradition. Even today, if you bite and give no one will eat. Perhaps with a husband and wife it is possible. *Śiṣya* will take anything from his *guru*. Only there is it possible. What is touched by somebody's tongue is never touched by another. They will not even think of it. If you offer a banana to a deer, it will of course eat it; it loves banana. But if you touch the banana to your tongue first, the deer will smell and go away - never touch it. It can smell the slightest touch of saliva. A *sādhu* told me this and I tried it. The deer won't eat. They are a very pure animal. That is why the skin of a deer is something that is used to keep off dampness. The *sādhu* will sit on the skin. The deer is a *śuddha* animal. There is a certain sense of purity. It is not that the *sādhu* will kill for the skin. They get them from hunters

and purify them first. They put down a grass mat and then put down the skin. It is a tradition, and it is an instruction that tells on what one should sit and with what posture one should sit. Nevertheless, we do not use the lack of a deerskin as a reason not to meditate – “I am all set, except I don’t have a deerskin.” The yogins chose the right thing for this *āsana*.

Due to her devotion, Shabari forgot what she was doing and tested the berries. Good and bad, all judgments, go away, cast to the winds. They do not mean anything. Shabari does not remember all that. *Dharmādharmā* was not significant when Rama was by her side. She was ecstatic. She thought only, “Rama should eat, and he should not bite a sour one.” That was all that was in her mind. She knew Rama loved those fruits.

The great singer Tyagaraja sang of her: “*Shabarin, aparama bhakti yanto...*” What devotion these people had. Would Shabari give something touched by her tongue to Rama unless there was some devotion making all *dharmādharmā* disappear in her eyes?

After singing of Rama, Tyagaraja sings of Krishna. Yashoda knows that her son, Krishna, is a blessing that is given to her, not an ordinary boy. Once, when he was eating mud and his mother asked him to open his mouth, he showed her what was inside. She saw the whole creation there including herself. When she had asked if he had mud in his mouth, he had even told her to shut up. But she knew he was the Lord, and he knew she wanted to play the role of mother. He let her tether him to a mortar, to keep him from getting into more mischief. Yashoda knew very well no one could tie him. But her devotion was such that she got him to sit down, and she tied him there for a bit.

Tyagaraja then sings of Hanuman. Certainly Hanuman had monkey-like qualities, but when he knew Rama was across the ocean, he jumped to the other side. What devotion. We will see that. All Karnatic music is based on the compositions of this Tyagaraja and a few other composers. Their songs praise the devotees’ love: “Hey, Rama, what *bhakti* is this. Oh, Lord, what *bhakti*.” Tyagaraja sings of his omissions and commissions, the things not to be done that he had done. He sings of how much *ānanda* he enjoyed anyway, “What this *bhakti* cannot do?” Rama’s encounter with Shabari is a beautiful section in Ramayana. The son of Dasharatha, our Rama, was received and well worshipped by that Shabari.

पम्पातीरे हनुमता सङ्गतो वानरेण ह ॥ १-१-५८

हनुमद्वचनाच्छैव सुग्रीवेण समागतः । सुग्रीवाय च तत्सर्वं शंसद्रामो महाबलः ॥ १-१-५९

आदितस्तदœ यथा वृत्तं सीतायाश्च विशेषतः । १-१-६०

*pampātīre hanumatā saṅgato vānareṇa ha || 1-1-58*

*hanumadvacanācchaiva sugrīveṇa samāgataḥ |*

*sugrīvāya ca tatsarvaṁ śaṁsadrāmo mahābalaḥ || 1-1-59*

*āditastad yathā vṛttaṁ sītāyāśca viśeṣataḥ |1-1-60*

Having entered the small kingdom Kishkinda, along the banks of River Pampa where there were many forests, Rama was met by Hanuman the *vānara*. The *vānaras* were a peculiar set of people in the form of monkeys. Each had the body of a monkey, but they could talk, could read, could do all a human being could do plus all the monkeys can do. They were a powerful set of people, quite interesting. As we heard, they have that connection to the gods. They were very strong, mighty, and each one had many powers. It was a Vanara monkey kingdom ruled by King Vali. His strength was something you cannot imagine.

Sugriva was Vali's brother. Once Vali was in a battle and he chased through a cave after his foe. For months the fight went on. He did not come out of the cave. Sugriva had been posted at the entrance to the cave and was supposed to remain waiting there for his brother. When Vali did not turn up, Sugriva thought, "He must be dead." Sugriva then placed a big stone over the entrance and covered it. Sugriva assumed rule of the Vanara kingdom. When Vali at last came back to the cave entrance, he saw the stone and assumed that Sugriva had wanted him to die in the cave. Vali emerged and there ensued a big fight between the two brothers, and Sugriva was thrown out of the kingdom, banished. Vali regained control of the kingdom, and he took Sugriva's wife, Tara, for his own. This was the wrong thing to do. Even though Sugriva complained to Vali, it was done. This is how it was.

Sugriva was without a kingdom and without his troop, and he had to remain outside. The monkeys all go in a group and they fight amongst themselves and there is always a leader. The outcast monkey is often the one that seeks to come into the houses of people, for he cannot go to his own group. He is a sad fellow. Like the one in our *āśram* in Bombay. I think most animals have that. The strong rules; the jungle law; the survival of the fittest; the might rules there.

Sugriva had a faithful minister named Hanuman. Hanuman was a very eloquent speaker and a good thinker and a nine-grammar-system pandit. There were nine scholarly systems of grammar, one of them Panini's. One is enough. There were nine, and all of them Hanuman knew. He was *medhāvī*, one with a great memory; and a great *bhaktā*, a great devotee. This was Hanuman - faithful to his master, Sugriva, and the greatest minister that anybody had at any time. He always

gave the right advice at the right time. In Kishkinda, Hanuman happened to see Rama and Lakshmana coming. He knew that these were two princes, and not just princes of the jungle. He approached them and talked to them and understood who they were. He appreciated what Rama was, and he surrendered to Rama. He befriended Rama, and Rama loved Hanuman. Rama knew from Hanuman's speech and comportment that Hanuman was a great person. Rama was happy just being in Hanuman's presence. Through Hanuman, Rama befriended Sugriva. Rama, the refuge of all people, took the help of Sugriva for finding Sita. Rama knew he needed help in the battle ahead.

Rama listened to Sugriva's story of how he lost his kingdom and his wife. Sugriva wanted them back. But Sugriva knew that he could not match Vali's measureless strength. Vali also had another great boon. Anybody who meets Vali in battle yields half of his strength to Vali. Thus Vali was always stronger than anyone who had to face him. It was impossible to defeat Vali. Hanuman took Rama to Sugriva. Sugriva asked Rama to help right the wrong, and Rama had to right the wrong.

Hanuman can mean "always ready." *Kinkārah, kim na karoti*, what all things he won't do. You tell him to do anything, he will do anything. Once, in a battle between Rama and Ravana, Hanuman was to go and bring a particular leaf, an herb from the hill Sanchivi, which would revive the unconscious Rama, who had been stunned during the fight. The leaves had been described to him, but Hanuman was not sure which were the right ones. They all looked the same to him, and he was running out of time. Which leaf to take? He thought, "Let that fellow back at the battle figure it out." He lifted the whole hill and flew back with it. That's the story. That is Hanuman, a great character. Hanuman was in the form of a monkey, but there were no monkey pranks in Hanuman. He was always ready to serve.

Hanuman was wise and well-informed and had all the advantages of his monkey *śarīra*, and exalted human mind. Best of all the monkeys in skills was Hanuman; only Vali was a match in strength. Vali had committed some mistakes, otherwise Vali was a great devotee. These are not monkeys really, they just had a peculiar *śarīra*, tails and such. Seeing this Hanuman, Rama was highly pleased. Such a character is a wonder. What a wonder. Sugriva became a friend, Hanuman became more than a friend. Rama took the time to tell Sugriva how it happened that he and Lakshmana came to the forest, highlighting how Sita was lost. He gave all the specifics of their predicament. Prince Rama himself had been attacked by this Ravana. As a *kṣatriya* his duty is to protect *dharma*, and he finds the problem has come to his own house. He wants to see that Sita is brought back and that *rākṣasa* is punished, if necessary.

*To be continued...*