

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the twenty fourth part of the serial article, continuation from July 2023 newsletter.

Vishvamitra came to the gates of Ayodhya and told the gatekeepers to inform the king that Vishvamitra had come. Everybody knew Vishvamitra's name, and the keepers ran to Dasharatha. Dasharatha hurried to the gate with all the ministers and received the great ṛṣi. Vishvamitra, as though concerned, asked questions about the state of the kingdom and of the people and of the activities and rituals that were going on, all the customary questions. Dasharatha told him of the blessing his family had received. Then, uncustomarily, Vishvamitra turned and greeted Vasishtha and the other sages and the ministers in Dasharatha's court. Dasharatha expressed his great pleasure at the arrival of his distinguished guest. He said it was a great fulfillment that the *brahmaṛṣi* would come to his palace. Dasharatha asked the purpose of the visit. He asked if he could be of any help. He said he would take on his head whatever order Vishvamitra gave and carry it out. Dasharatha compared Vishvamitra's visit with a sickly man getting *amṛta*, that elixir which will immortalize this body. He was that happy. It was like a dry land receiving a thorough rainfall, like a woman who prayed for a child receiving the blessing of a pregnancy, like the sudden reappearance of something dear that had been irretrievably lost. The king was that happy. It was the important day in his life. He spoke of the renown of the great sage, and remarked at the great achievement of *brahmaṛṣitvam*. "Seeing you is for me no less than the pilgrimage to all the great *punya*kṣetras. Please let me know why you have come."

तच्छ्रुत्वा राजसिंहस्य वाक्यमद्भुतविस्तरम् । हृष्टरोमा महातेजा विश्वामित्रोऽभ्यभाषत ॥ १-१९-१

सदृशं राजशार्दूलं तवैव भुवि नान्यतः । महावंशप्रसूतस्य वसिष्ठव्यपदेशिनः ॥ १-१९-२

यत् तु मे हृद्गतं वाक्यं तस्य कार्यस्य निश्चयम् । कुरुष्व राजशार्दूल भव सत्यप्रतिश्रवः ॥ १-१९-३

अहं नियममातिष्ठे सिद्धयर्थं पुरुषर्षभ । तस्य विघ्नकरौ द्वौ तु राक्षसौ कामरूपिणौ ॥ १-१९-४

व्रते तु बहुशश्चीर्णे समाप्त्यां राक्षसाविमौ । मारीचश्च सुबाहुश्च वीर्यवन्तौ सुशिक्षितौ ॥ १-१९-५

तौ मांसरुधिरौघेण वेदिं तामभ्यवर्षताम् । अवधूते तथाभूते तस्मिन् नियमनिश्चये ॥ १-१९-६

कृतश्रमो निरुत्साहस्तस्मादœ देशादपाक्रमे । न च मे क्रोधमुत्स्रष्टुं बुद्धिर्भवति पार्थिव ॥ १-१९-७
तथाभूता हि सा चर्या न शापस्तत्र मुच्यते । स्वपुत्रं राजशार्दूल रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् ॥ १-१९-८
काकपक्षधरं वीरं ज्येष्ठं मे दातुमर्हसि । शक्तो ह्येष मया गुप्तो दिव्येन स्वेन तेजसा ॥ १-१९-९
राक्षसा ये विकर्तारस्तेषामपि विनाशने । श्रेयश्चास्मै प्रदास्यामि बहुरूपं न संशयः ॥ १-१९-१०
त्रयाणामपि लोकानां येन ख्यातिं गमिष्यति । न च तौ राममासाद्य शक्तौ स्थातुं कथंचन ॥ १-१९-११

*tacchrutvā rājasimhasya vākya madbhutavistaram ।
hr̥ṣṭaromā mahātejā viśvāmitro' bhyabhāṣata ॥ 1-19-1
sadṛśaṁ rājaśārdūla tavaiva bhuvī nānyataḥ ।
mahāvamśaprasūtasya vasiṣṭhavyapadeśinaḥ ॥ 1-19-2
yat tu me hr̥dgataṁ vākyaṁ tasya kāryasya niścayam ।
kuruṣva rājaśārdūla bhava satyapratiśravaḥ ॥ 1-19-3
ahaṁ niyamamātiṣṭhe siddhyarthaṁ puruṣarṣabha ।
tasya viḡnakarau dvau tu rākṣasau kāmarūpiṇau ॥ 1-19-4
vrate tu bahuśāścīrṇe samāptyāṁ rākṣasāvīmau ।
mārīcaśca subāhuśca vīryavantaḥ suśikṣitau ॥ 1-19-5
tau māṁsarudhiraugheṇa vedīṁ tāmabhyavarṣatām ।
avadhūte tathābhūte tasmīn niyamaniścaye ॥ 1-19-6
kṛtaśramo nirutsāhastasmād deśādapākrame ।
na ca me krodhamutsraṣṭuṁ buddhirbhavati pārthiva ॥ 1-19-7
tathābhūtā hi sā caryā na śāpastatra mucyate ।
svaputraṁ rājaśārdūla rāmaṁ satyaparākramam ॥ 1-19-8
kākapakṣadharaṁ vīraṁ jyeṣṭhaṁ me dātumarhasi ।
śakto hyeṣa mayā gupto divyena svena tejasā ॥ 1-19-9
rākṣasā ye vikartāraṣṭeṣāmapī vināśane ।
śreyaścāsmāi pradāsyāmi bahurūpaṁ na saṁśayaḥ ॥ 1-19-10
trayāṇāmāpī lokānāṁ yena khyātiṁ gamiṣyati ।
na ca tau rāmamāsādyā śaktau sthātūṁ kathaṅcana ॥ 1-19-11*

The great Vishvamitra was obviously in a good mood. Hearing Dasharatha's fine words of praise and promise, he knew he could ask for what he wanted.

Vishvamitra said, "Oh, you are the great lion among kings, exalted among all rulers, born into this foremost royal family on this earth. Indeed, you have been taught by Vasishtha." Vishvamitra takes Vasishtha into account as a friend now. Although at one time Vasishtha was an object of his envy.

"There is no one on earth like you," said Vishvamitra to Dasharatha, "I will tell you now what is in my heart, and you must do it. You must live up to the words you have spoken." Dasharatha was all ears now; his buildup had been very big, and he waited for the other shoe to drop.

Vishvamitra said, "A number of times I have started a ritual to achieve a certain end. But there are two fellows, *rākṣasas*, Marica and Subahu, who come and disturb the ritual. Last time they destroyed it. They brought bleeding meat and poured it into the ritual and spoiled it. They have done this same thing to other fellows. O King, if I were to get angry I could finish off these two demons. But I cannot afford to get angry nowadays. This particular ritual that I am trying to complete does not allow me to get angry with anyone. I really am in a corner. Therefore, O *rāja*, that Rama, that powerful one, that one with the hair tied to one side, your eldest son, should be given to me for a few days. He can take care of the *rākṣasas* and protect the ritual. Then I will bring him back again. Lakshmana can come along with him."

Dasharatha was stunned, "You ask for Rama? He is not even sixteen. He may be great, but he has never been in a real battle. He has not even seen one. These two *rākṣasas* are tricksters, *māyāvīs*. They do not just stand there and fight, they have all kinds of magic. They are *tapasvins*: their powers are extraordinary. They go like devotees to the gods, learn and gain the powers, and they come back and wreck things. They did *tapas* just for *karmaphala*. I will come instead. Until my last breath I will fight, and you know I am no mean fighter. I will protect your ritual. I will bring my armies. What can a single Rama do?" The king went on and on. He was confused, unsure. He did not even know if he could defeat the two *rākṣasas*. "I will come with Rama; just do not take him away from me. What can be gained by sending him alone to the forest? He is just a growing boy. Please do not ask me to send Rama."

अहं ते प्रतिजानामि हतौ तौ विद्धि राक्षसौ । अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्य पराक्रमम् ॥ १-१९-१४
वसिष्ठोऽपि महातेजा ये चेमे तपसि स्थिताः । यदि ते धर्मलाभं तु यशश्च परमं भुवि ॥ १-१९-१५
स तु वीर्यवतां वीर्यमादत्ते युधि रावणः । तेन चाहं न शक्तोऽस्मि संयोद्धुं तस्य वा बलैः ॥ १-२०-२३
सबलो वा मुनिश्रेष्ठ सहितो वा ममात्मजैः । कथमप्यमरप्रख्यं संग्रामाणामकोविदम् ॥ १-२०-२४
इति नरपतिजल्पनादœ द्विजेन्द्रं कुशिकसुतं सुमहान् विवेश मन्युः ।

सुहुत इव मखेऽग्निराज्यसिक्तः समभवदुज्ज्वलितो महर्षिवह्निः ॥ १-२०-२८

aham te pratijānāmi hatau tau viddhi rākṣasau |

aham vedmi mahātmānaṁ rāmaṁ satya parākramam || 1-19-14

vasiṣṭho'pi mahātejā ye ceme tapasi sthitāḥ |

yadi te dharmalābhaṁ tu yaśaśca paramaṁ bhuvi || 1-19-15

sa tu vīryavatāṁ vīryamādatte yudhi rāvaṇaḥ |

tena cāhaṁ na śakto'smi saṁyoddhuraṁ tasya vā balaiḥ || 1-20-23

sabalo vā munīśreṣṭha sahito vā mamātmajaīḥ |

kathamapyamaraprakhyāṁ saṅgrāmāṇāmakovidam || 1-20-24

iti narapatijalpanād dvijendraṁkuśikasutaṁ sumahān viveśa manyuḥ |

suhuta iva makhe'gnirājyasiktaḥsamabhavadujjvalito maharṣivahniḥ || 1-20-28

Vishvamitra replied, "I know, Vasishtha knows, all *tapasvins* know who this Rama is. They do not take Rama as a boy or anything ordinary. I promise these two demons will be destroyed." But Dasharatha was not swayed, he would not send Rama alone. Vishvamitra was highly disappointed. Valmiki's verses show here that Dasharatha's rejection of the request was contradictory and confused. Dasharatha had lost his wisdom for the time being out of sheer attachment to Rama and sheer fear of losing his son. After this stammering by the *mahārāja* Dasharatha, *manyuḥ* entered. Anger entered the great Brahman, the great *ṛṣi* Vishvamitra. In a fire ritual, if you offer oblations of ghee and the fire is very well fed, the flames become brilliant and reach out. The *mahārṣi* was *vani*; he looked like fire. Everyone in the assembly became frightened, wondering what this *ṛṣi* would do.

तच्छ्रुत्वा वचनं तस्य स्नेहपर्याकुलाक्षरम् । समन्युः कौशिको वाक्यं प्रत्युवाच महीपतिम् ॥ १-२१-१

पूर्वमर्थं प्रतिश्रुत्य प्रतिज्ञां हातुमिच्छसि । राघवाणामयुक्तोऽयं कुलस्यास्य विपर्ययः ॥ १-२१-२

यदिदं ते क्षमं राजन् गमिष्यामि यथागतम् । मिथ्याप्रतिज्ञः काकुत्स्थ सुखी भव सुहृदः ॥ १-२१-३

तस्य रोषपरीतस्य विश्वामित्रस्य धीमतः । चचाल वसुधा कृत्स्ना देवानां च भयं महत् ॥ १-२१-४

tacchrutvā vacanam tasya snehaparyākulākṣaram |

samanyuḥ kauśiko vākyam pratyuvāca mahīpatim || 1-21-1

pūrvamartham pratisrutya pratijñām hātumicchasi |

rāghavānāmayaḥ kulasyāsya viparyayaḥ || 1-21-2

yadidam te kṣamam rājan gamiṣyāmi yathāgatam |

mithyāpratijñāḥ kākutstha sukhī bhava suhr̥d vṛtaḥ || 1-21-3

tasya roṣaparītasya viśvāmitrasya dhīmataḥ |

cacāla vasudhā kṛtsnā devānām ca bhayam mahat || 1-21-4

Vishvamitra turned angrily to Dasharatha, “At first you gave me your word; you said you would do whatever I wanted. Now you want to destroy your own words. I never thought you would be hungry enough to eat your own words. In the *kula* of Raghu, this is not proper. No king in this dynasty has ever contradicted or gone back on his word. It is unheard of. It is improper. If this is what you choose, if it fits you well, okay. Okay. I will return the same way I came. It does not matter. You, *mithyāpratijñā*, who gives a false promise, can be happy here with your kind.” Having heard these words, the earth and the *devas* themselves were shaking. Nevertheless Vishvamitra had not actually cursed anyone. This was not the Vishvamitra of old. Perhaps he hoped that everything would work out in the end. What’s more, Vasishtha would not let it stand like this.

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त्रस्तरूपं तु विज्ञाय जगदœ सर्वं महानृषिः । नृपतिं सुव्रतो धीरो वसिष्ठो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ १-२१-५
इक्ष्वाकूणां कुले जातः साक्षादœ धर्म इवापरः । धृतिमान् सुव्रतः श्रीमान् न धर्मं हातुमर्हसि ॥ १-२१-६
त्रिषु लोकेषु विख्यातो धर्मात्मा इति राघव । स्वधर्मं प्रतिपद्यस्व नाधर्मं वोढुमर्हसि ॥ १-२१-७
प्रतिश्रुत्य करिष्येति उक्तं वाक्यमकुर्वतः । इष्टापूर्तवधो भूयात् तस्मादœ रामं विसर्जय ॥ १-२१-८
कृतास्त्रमकृतास्त्रं वा नैवं शक्यन्ति राक्षसाः । गुप्तं कुशिकपुत्रेण ज्वलनेनामृतं यथा ॥ १-२१-९
एष विग्रहवान् धर्म एष वीर्यवतां वरः । एष विद्याधिको लोके तपसश्च परायणम् ॥ १-२१-१०
एषोऽस्त्रान् विविधान् वेत्ति त्रैलोक्ये सचराचरे । नैनमन्यः पुमान् वेत्ति न च वेत्स्यन्ति केचन ॥ १-२१-११
न देवा नर्षयः केचिन्नासुरा न च राक्षसाः । गन्धर्वयक्षप्रवराः सकिंनरमहोरगाः ॥ १-२१-१२
सर्वास्त्राणि कृशाश्वस्य पुत्राः परमधार्मिकाः । कौशिकाय पुरा दत्ता यदा राज्यं प्रशासति ॥ १-२१-१३

trastarūpaṁ tu vijñāya jagad sarvaṁ mahānṛṣiḥ |

nṛpatiṁ suvratō dhīro vasiṣṭho vākyaṁ abravīt || 1-21-5

ikṣvākūṇāṁ kule jātaḥ sāksād dharmā ivāparaḥ |

dhṛtimān suvrataḥ śrīmān na dharmāṁ hātumarhasi || 1-21-6

triṣu lokeṣu vikhyāto dharmātmā iti rāghava |

svadharmāṁ pratipadyasva nādharmāṁ voḍhumarhasi || 1-21-7

pratiśrutya kariṣyēti uktaṁ vākyaṁ akurvataḥ |

iṣṭāpūrtavadho bhūyāt tasmād rāmaṁ visarjaya || 1-21-8

kṛtāstramakṛtāstraṁ vā naivaṁ śakṣyanti rākṣasāḥ |

guptaṁ kuśikaputrena jvalanēnāmṛtaṁ yathā || 1-21-9

eṣa vighrahaṅgān dharmā eṣa vīryavataṁ varaḥ |

eṣa vidyādhiko loke tapasaśca parāyaṇam || 1-21-10

eṣo' strān vividhān vetti trailokye sacarācare |

nainamanyāḥ pumān vetti na ca vetsyanti kecana || 1-21-11

na devā narṣayaḥ kecinnāsura na ca rākṣasāḥ |

gandharvayakṣaprarāḥ sakinnaramahoragāḥ || 1-21-12

sarvāstrāṇi kṛśāsvasya putrāḥ paramadhārmikāḥ |

kauśikāya purā dattā yadā rājyaṁ praśāsati || 1-21-13

Vasishtha, *guru* to the king, said, “O king, you are born in the line of the Ikshvaku, a Raghava, if there were a *devatā* for *dharma* you would be another. People look to you for guidance. You are man of fortitude and resolve, generous and forgiving; you are no threat to *dharma*. You are praised throughout all the three worlds and are not qualified to follow *adharma*. Having given your word, if now you go against that, all your good actions will be destroyed. Better to give up Rama. When Vishvamitra is around, no *rākṣasa*, with or without weapons, can touch Rama. Vishvamitra is a man of power, wisdom, and *dharma*. There is no one greater in *tapas*, and being a king, he knows well the ways of battle. He has the tricks and the *mantras* that make the best missiles. Better send Rama. It will be his blessing. No one really knows the true greatness of this Vishvamitra, nor knows his power. Rama will be in safe hands. There could be no one better able to protect Rama. There is no *rākṣasa* that Vishvamitra himself could not finish off. Hear me, it is not just to protect his ritual that he has come, it is to bless Rama and Lakshmana. He has come and asked you for your son; this is the time to send Rama. Do not delay.”

तेषां निग्रहणे शक्तः स्वयं च कुशिकात्मजः । तव पुत्रहितार्थाय त्वामुपेत्याभियाचते ॥ १-२१-२१

इति मुनिवचनात् प्रसन्नचित्तो रघुवृषभश्च मुमोद पार्थिवाग्रचः ।

गमनमभिरुचोच राघवस्य प्रथितयशाः कुशिकात्मजाय बुध्या ॥ १-२१-२२

तथा वसिष्ठे ब्रुवति राजा दशरथः स्वयम् । प्रहृष्टवदनो राममाजुहाव सलक्ष्मणम् ॥ १-२२-१

teṣāṁ nigrahaṇe śaktaḥ svayaṁ ca kuśikātmajah |

tava putrahitārthāya tvāmupetyābhiyācate || 1-21-21

iti munivacanāt prasannacitto raghuvṛṣabhaśca mumoda pārvhivāgryah |

gamanamabhiruroca rāghavasya prathitayaśāḥ kuśikātmajāya budhyā || 1-21-22

tathā vasiṣṭhe bruvati rājā daśarathah svayam |

prahrṣṭavadano rāmamājuhāva salakṣmaṇam || 1-22-1

By these words of Vasishtha, the great King Dasharatha, reassured, freed from concerns and sadness and confusion, regained his demeanor and his brilliance. Gradually his mind became resigned to sending Rama along with Vishvamitra

To be continued...