

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

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इक्ष्वाकुवंशप्रभवो रामो नाम जनैः श्रुतः । नियतात्मा महावीर्यो द्युतिमान् धृतिमान् वशी ॥ १-१-८
बुद्धिमान् नीतिमान् वाग्मी श्रीमाञ्छत्रुनिबर्हणः । विपुलांसो महाबाहुः कंबुग्रीवो महाहनुः ॥ १-१-९
महोरस्क्यो महेष्वासो गूढजत्रुररिन्दमः । आजानुबाहुः सुशिराः सुललाटः सुविक्रमः ॥ १-१-१०
समः समविभक्तांगः स्निग्धवर्णः प्रतापवान् । पीनवक्षा विशालाक्षो लस्मीवाञ्छुभलक्षणः ॥ १-१-११
धर्मज्ञः सत्यसन्धश्च प्रजानां च हिते रतः । यशस्वी ज्ञानसंपन्नः शुचिर्वश्यः समाधिमान् ॥ १-१-१२
प्रजापतिसमः श्रीमान् धता रिपुनिषूदनः । रक्शिता जीवलोकस्य धर्मस्य परिरक्शिता ॥ १-१-१३

ikṣvākuvaṁśaprabhavo rāmo nāma janaiḥ śrutaiḥ |
niyatātmā mahāvīrya dyutimān dhṛtimān vaśī || 1-1-8
buddhimān nītimān vāgmī śrīmān catrunibarhaṇaḥ |
vipulāṁso mahābāhuḥ kambugrīvo mahāhanuḥ || 1-1-9
mahorasko maheṣvāso gūḍhajatrurarindamaḥ |
ājānubāhuḥ susīrāḥ sulalāṭaḥ suvikramaḥ || 1-1-10
samaḥ samavibhaktāṅgaḥ snigdhavarnaḥ pratāpavān |
pīnavakṣā viśālākṣo lasmīvāñchubhalakṣaṇaḥ || 1-1-11
dharmajñaiḥ satyasandhaśca prajānāṁ ca hite rataḥ |
yaśasvī jñānasampannaḥ śucirośyaḥ samādhimān || 1-1-12
prajāpatisamaḥ śrīmān dhatā ripuniṣūdanaḥ |
rakṣitā jīvalokasya dharmasya parirakṣitā || 1-1-13

Narada in fact gives a bigger list of Rama's qualities than Valmiki asked for.

“You want to know about that man called by his people Rama. Ikshvaku, Raghu, and others were all kings in the Solar dynasty. Rama was born in that family. He fulfills all that you asked for, and a few more things as well. Rama is one whose mind is at his command, *niyatātmā*; he is a master of the ways of thinking. The mind is an instrument which he handles and which does not handle him. He is *mahāvīryaḥ*: he has immeasurable strength. He is well coordinated, *vaśī*. He has a

multi-faceted brilliance, *dyutimān*. His has fortitude, *dhṛtimān* and his heart is not fickle. To find them together is a rare thing. He is not just a King Kong who cannot handle Panini. He has a brilliant mind and body capable of stamina and strength and physical skill. They do not often go together. *Buddhimān*: He is one who gathers and makes use of his wisdom. He is able to make his wisdom serve him. He has the capacity to learn from his experiences and to put what he has learned to work for him. Rama is a man of justice, of *dharma*. He has that sense, and even at the cost of his own comfort and safety he will uphold justice. He never swerves from that line. He is eloquent and has a way with words. He speaks well with a measure that shows his discipline and his will' he is a *vāgmī*. His delivery is unmistakably true. One never doubts his intent or his commitment."

We will see that another character in the Ramayana, Hanuman, is considered to be a great conversationalist and orator. In the Ramayana, we will see Hanuman give instructions on proper speech. You can see Valmiki changing his style of writing when he has Rama speak. When Rama or Hanuman speaks, the whole style of expression changes. Valmiki subtly changes the structure of the Sanskrit to show the discipline Rama uses, how he measures his words in order for each one to carry proper weight.

When Rama speaks, he is behind the words - there is nothing for him to take back. He delivers the goods. His heart gets into his voice and into his words. When you are being empathetic, when you express sympathy or love or share another's grief, you cannot say much. What can you say? But your honesty and sincerity imbue your words and your voice; you are convincing and communicate to that person. There is a way of saying everything: a request, an order, an imploration, empathy - each requires a certain quality. It is not something you can teach, but it is something that can be cultivated and learned. It is an accomplishment of communication. Rama has that in full.

Rama is one who wields wealth - *śrīmān*. He is not wielded by wealth. There

are those who worship wealth, and they become the servants of that wealth. Wealth is great, but it should not rule you and make you miserly. Rama is born a prince, and wrongdoers become inimical to him. He does not make enemies, but those who oppose him will be taught a lesson; he is the *śatrunibarhaṇaḥ*.

He has broad shoulders and strong arms, *vipulāṁsaḥ* and *mahābāhuḥ*. His neck is like a conch - for some reason – perhaps it tapers. His cheeks are fine and wide. His chest is massive, and he is a great archer. In fact, Rama proved himself to be the greatest archer. His shoulder blades are well-developed and flanked by muscle. He disciplines his foes. His long arms reach toward his knees. His head is well proportioned with a wide brow. His walk is an engaging, smooth stride. In every aspect this man is radiant and forthright, and handsome.

Narada describes this man who is all Valmiki asked for and more. This man, Rama, is tall but not too tall. His limbs are perfectly proportioned - as if he were designed according to the *sāstra lakṣaṇā* which describe the ideal person. His color is something pleasing. He is renowned and is recognized wherever he goes. His chest can expand for a prodigious amount of air. His eyes are clear, large, and well set in his head. He has *lakṣmī*; he has an aura. This is the only time I will use this word. When you are around this man, you feel secure. You feel he can take care of all your needs. He has the infectious confidence of a rich man. All the other *aṅgalakṣaṇāni*: the lines on the hands, the lines on the feet, the pores on the face, all the signs that show the qualities of a person are auspicious on him and show his nobility.

He is a *dharmajñā*: Without any conflict he knows right from wrong. His expression is in keeping with his knowledge. His grasp of *dharma* is complete. He is committed to the words he speaks. He abides in his concern for the good of the people. He has glorious accomplishments and knowledge. He is clean inside and outside. In a way Rama is like a child, for he can easily be won over by love. Those who seek his help will never be let down. He is one who is very alert in protecting those who come to him for his refuge and protection. He is a man whose mind is

capable of unqualified absorption. In his creative power Rama is equal to Prajapati, to Brahman, the four-headed creator himself. He has *śrī*, all wealth, with him. He is well married to Sita. He nourishes and succors all people. He is their sustainer.

Rama becomes victorious in battle. He is one who protects. He protects plant life and animal life and human life. Anything that lives has nothing to fear from him. He is the champion of justice. How does one become the protector, *rakṣita*, of *dharma*? Humans have the power of choice; they can choose between two courses of action. One is right, and one is wrong. It is not difficult to understand. By enforcing *dharma*, by his example and his conviction, he is the protector of *dharma*. His enforcement includes the qualities of sympathy and mercy. He has such stature and influence that even a criminal will respect his verdict. Rama commands *dharma* because he knows it in terms of the whole and in terms of himself. In fact, this whole book is one of *dharma* alone. All the time, in different situations, the concern is what is right. Rama decides and follows what he decides. He is a king worthy of his station. His protection of his own *dharma*, *svāsya dharma*, and of his people's *dharma* coincide.

रक्षिता स्वस्य धर्मस्य स्वजनस्य च रक्षिता । वेदवेदाङ्गतत्त्वज्ञो धनुर्वेदे च निष्ठितः ॥ १-१-१४

सर्वशास्त्रार्थतत्त्वज्ञः स्मृतिमान् प्रतिभानवान् । सर्वलोकप्रियः साधुरदीनात्मा विचक्षणः ॥ १-१-१५

rakṣitā svasya dharmasya svajanasya ca rakṣitā |

vedavedāṅgatattvajño dhanurvede ca niṣṭhitaḥ || 1-1-14

sarvaśāstrārthatattvajñaḥ smṛtimān pratibhānavān |

sarvalokapriyaḥ sādthuradīnātmā vicakṣaṇaḥ || 1-1-15

Rama knows Veda, and Veda here is *karmakāṇḍa*, that which deals with various rituals, and actions and their results. He knows *dharmaśāstra*, what is right and wrong in terms of the first portion of the Veda. He knows those truths. He is the *sarvaśāstratattvajña*. He knows the six-fold disciplines of knowledge, the *vedāṅgas*, which go along with the study of the Veda - phonetics, regulations for rituals,

etymology, astronomy and astrology, prosody and meter. He knows the *śāstra* that explain the world and God - about men, about a man, about the self. He knows all Upanishads and the allied books that go along with them. He knows very clearly the fact of the truth unfolded by the various Upanishads.

One may know all the *śāstra*, but when the time comes to cite the *śāstra*, to quote the verse, he may just scratch his head. Rama is one who can recite any and all of the texts that he understands. He remembers all that went before. He is the *smṛtimān*. There are those students for whom, if you tell them something, it is like sprinkling water on a hot griddle. What they remember lasts that long. That is the first type of student, the teacher's tragedy. Some things need only be understood. Certain things are to be understood and remembered. Just as is true with grammar rules, it does not work if every day is a fresh, new class and what has gone before has disappeared. Then you may see a *shloka* that describes another type of student who is like a lotus leaf off of whom water pours without a trace. He may embellish with some words what he has heard, but nothing really sticks. The third type of student is like an oyster: he picks up a grain of sand along with the water and makes it into a pearl. He makes it his own. He thinks over what he has heard and makes it complete. This one is the teacher's blessing. The one in-between receives the teaching, and at the same time he is untouched by it. In spite of any amount of teaching, he remains the same. His heart is not wet by the knowledge. Rama is one who has made the *śāstra* his own. He is the *pratibhānavān*. He has made it more thorough. He hears one thing, and he understands the whole from that.

To be continued...

“You do not require a particular altar to invoke the Lord. You can invoke Him anywhere, because what is it that is not the Lord? The whole order is the Lord, all the laws are the Lord. That is the appreciation of the Lord on the part of a mature person.”

.- Swami Dayananda Saraswati