

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the thirteenth part of the serial article, continuation from June 2022 newsletter.

ततः शूर्पणखावाक्यादुद्युक्तान् सर्वराक्षसान् । खरं त्रिशिरसं चैव दूषणं चैव राक्षसम् ॥ १-१-४७
निजघान रणे रामस्तेषां चैव पदानुगान् । वने तस्मिन् निवसता जनस्थाननिवासिनाम् ॥ १-१-४८
रक्षसां निहतान्यासन् सहस्राणि चतुर्दश । ततो ज्ञातिवधं श्रुत्वा रावणः क्रोधमूर्च्छितः ॥ १-१-४९
सहायं वरयामास मारीचं नाम राक्षसम् । वार्यमाणः सुबहुशो मारीचेन स रावणः ॥ १-१-५०

tataḥ śūrpaṇakhāvākyādudyuktān sarvarākṣasān |

kharam triśirasam caiva dūṣaṇam caiva rākṣasam || 1-1-47

nijaghāna raṇe rāmasteṣāṃ caiva padānugān |

vane tasmin nivasatā janasthānanivāsinām || 1-1-48

rākṣasāṃ nihatānyāsan sahasrāṇi caturdaśa |

tato jñātivadhāṃ śrutvā rāvaṇaḥ krodhamūrcchitaḥ || 1-1-49

sahāyaṃ varayāmasa mārīcaṃ nāma rākṣasam |

vāryamāṇaḥ subahuśo mārīcena sa rāvaṇaḥ || 1-1-50

Because of the words of Shurpanakha, the roused *rākṣasas* rose up and attacked the two princes and Sita. They wanted to destroy Rama and Lakshmana. The great *rākṣasas* Kara and Trishirasam and Dushana, the threesome whom all feared and who were chief among the Dandaka *rākṣasas*, along with their followers, fought Rama, who was single-handed. In that battle, Rama destroyed all the evil-doers. There is nothing to weep over. As a king, Rama is supposed to provide a better peace in the cities as well as in the villages and in the forest. From Janasthana, where the *rākṣasas* lived, fourteen thousand demons came and were slain and lay there under Rama's feet.

Then the great *rākṣasa* king with ten heads, Ravana, the ruler of Lanka, whose garden was watered by god Varuna, under whose control were even gods, who was the last word among *rākṣasas*, heard that his sister had been abused and had her nose cut. He also heard that a great many of his relatives had been destroyed. He grew angry and lost his *viveka*. He made up his mind to destroy Rama and Lakshmana. Ravana knew that he was not up against ordinary people, be-

cause it could not have been easy for an ordinary human to finish off all these *rākṣasas*. He decided he needed to use trickery. He knew, because Shurpanakha had told him, that there was this beautiful girl Sita there with Rama and Lakshmana. He wanted her, and he made up his mind to kidnap Sita. To fulfill his plan he wanted someone to help him. He called Marica. Marica was a *rākṣasa* who knew a lot of magic, black magic. Marica could assume different forms as he desired. Ravana approached *rākṣasa* Marica and asked for his help. Marica knew what Ravana was up against, and Marica, being wise to Rama, did not want to die. Marica advised Ravana to think twice before attacking Rama and Lakshmana, “Hey, Ravana, that *balavān* Rama is not an ordinary man. A fight will not be to your benefit. You cannot afford to have a quarrel with him; you will lose all your ten heads.” In various ways Ravana was slowed by Marica's arguments, even though Marica could not say no to his king, Ravana.

“Keep off this fellow. Don't go anywhere near him. It is not good for you.” Marica wanted to save his own skin also. Again, Marica could not say no to Ravana, but he made every possible argument.

Nevertheless Ravana would not listen, because the time had come. That is what he said, “*kāla coditaḥ.*” Ravana is affected by time, and the time had come. What time? The time for Rama's destruction. Some *karma* is involved in Ravana's timing. It is said that something of Sita's *karma* was involved. Ravana's *viveka* does not work, because it has been lost in his anger, even when someone tells him what is right and wrong, even though no ordinary man could have taken care of these three chief *rākṣasas* as well as the fourteen thousand, even though all the reasons had been given, still nothing enters into Ravana. Time had come. On all ten of his heads it had been written: One day, Rama has to die. As though induced by time, by his own *prārabdha karma*, impelled, helpless, having not paid attention to the words of Marica, he was transfixed.

Marica had to follow him. Marica thought, “At least I will die at the hands of Rama.” Marica agreed to the plan to kidnap Sita. Together Ravana and Marica went to the *āśram* in *daṇḍakāranya* where Rama and Lakshmana lived. Ravana's plan was that Marica would become a golden deer. As a golden deer, he should browse around the camp and draw the attention of Sita. He knew Sita

would ask for that irresistible, supple, golden deer. It is a thing of *māyā*; an undercurrent is there. It was a *māyā* deer. Fascinated by a deer that was not there, she would go for it. This is called *śobhanādhyāsa*, ascribing a false value. Ravana knew that Sita would fall for it. Rama and Lakshmana might object, but at the end of it they would have to yield. Because once a woman gets an idea into her head, it is very difficult to change her. That's what they think; I don't think so. Naturally Rama had to yield. He had to go out to catch the deer.

She wanted the deer alive. She wanted to pet that fascinating golden deer. She just could not resist. Lakshmana had told her that this did not look like a deer. Anything can happen in Dandaka, the place of *rākṣasas*. Lakshmana suggested they ignore it and not bother about it. Sita said no, she wanted the deer and she wanted it alive. Rama said okay, but he smelled some problem there. He told Lakshmana, "Stand here. Never leave Sita's side. There may be some trick here. Therefore you do not go out of this place." Lakshmana was told to take care of Sita. Rama had complete trust and confidence in Lakshmana. On Rama's word, Lakshmana would never move from that place. He would take care of Sita. Rama then took off after this deer.

The deer took off and dragged Rama away for some distance. Then Rama drew his bow and shot the deer. The deer fell down dying. This deer is that fellow Marica, that *rākṣasa*. That Marica called out, "Hey, Lakshmana. Hey, Sita!" He made it sound like Rama was calling. He imitated Rama's voice. This was according to Ravana's plan.

When Sita heard this, she immediately said to Lakshmana, "Hey, I think my lord is in trouble. I think he was hit or something. He told us not to move, but he is crying for help. Please go and help."

Lakshmana said, "No, I won't go. Rama told me that we should stay here."

Now, in a way, this is not the proper thing. It is like an old servant who just keeps doing the same thing even though he is told to do something else. But that is another long story. To tell a story I need not tell another story. But there is one story I can tell. Once this servant fellow burst in on his master, who was busy, and proclaimed, "Good news! A son is born to you."

The master of the house, who had been talking to some guests, scowled at

the disturbance from this fellow. The master sent the fellow away. Later he spoke to him and said, "When I am talking to my guests, have some sense. This is not the way you should announce that a son is born to me? You should bring a plate with some sugar and *candana*, all that, and respectfully say, 'Sir, here is some good news, a son is born to you.' That way it is beautiful. With such news you should always bring the plate of sugar and nicely tell what you have to say at the appropriate time. There is no reason for you to burst in like this and disrupt my guests."

The next day the house caught fire. The servant fellow prepared a plate of sugar and waited for a break in the conversation to calmly approach his master, "Sir, the house and the backyard are on fire."

Sita said, "No, it is not like that. Of course Rama told us to stay, but he was not in trouble when he said that. Don't you hear him calling our names? Who else knows our names? That deer does not know our names. Lakshmana, you must go see."

"I won't go," said the prince.

Then she began telling him things that he could not bear to hear at all, "Oh, you want Rama to die and then you can marry me. I'm not going to be your wife." Like this, she went on and on.

Lakshmana thought, "My god." Thoroughly conflicted, he agreed and said he would go find Rama. But Lakshmana knew nothing could happen to Rama. Thus there was this big argument between Lakshmana and Sita, and now he had to go. He drew a line on the ground and asked Sita not to cross the line, to remain there, and went after Rama.

Meanwhile, Rama knew it was Marica, because as the deer fell down, the *rākṣasa's* original form appeared. Then Rama knew some plot was there. He knew there was going to be some trouble. He rushed back toward the camp, and on the way he met Lakshmana. He said to Lakshmana, "Why are you here? Lakshmana!"

His brother said, "Well, she, uh, Sita wouldn't, wouldn't let me stay there. She heard your voice. She began saying things I could not stand. I had to come. What could I do?" They knew there was a problem and together they rushed back.

In the meantime, Ravana had come as a *sādhu*, as a *sannyāsī* he came. Ravana

knew that only as a *sannyāsī* could he create a trust in Sita. He came as a *sādhu*, came to Rama's hut, and asked for *bhikṣā*. "*Bhikṣān dehi,*" give *bhikṣā*, give alms. A woman of the house must necessarily give. There is no question; whatever she has, she will give. A *sannyāsī* has come, he is a respectable person, you should give. She went inside, and whatever she had she brought and offered. She asked him to take *bhikṣā*, and when he stepped to cross the line Lakshmana had drawn, there was fire. The fire was Lakshmana's *tapas*, and Ravana could not cross. It was Lakshmana's will that there should be fire should anyone cross the line. It was like an alarm - you cross the line and you should see the fire immediately. Ravana remarked at the fire and said he could not come in.

Sita said, "I will come out." In her innocence, she went out. When she came out she crossed the border, and when you cross the border you have had it. She crossed the boundary. I forgot to tell you, Ravana had an airship, like a special helicopter. It is called a *puṣpaka*. It was a two-seater, capable of making great journeys through space. It required no fuel; with *mantraśakti* it worked. Ravana grabbed Sita and lifted her up off the ground and put her in the *puṣpaka* and took off. After a short distance he ran into a great devotee of Rama, a celestial bird, a divine eagle, Jatayu. The eagle Jatayu fought with Ravana, fought to save Sita. Ravana was forced to land the *puṣpaka* and fight. On the ground, Ravana fatally injured Jatayu. As the great eagle lay dying, Ravana remounted the sky with Sita and headed for Lanka. He took her to Lanka, the island to the south of India. It may be Ceylon, or it may be some other island. It was an island some miles away from South India, from Rameshvaram. He kept Sita there at his palace on the island.

Sita would not talk to him. Ravana wanted her to be his queen, or whatever it is a *rākṣasa* wants. Sita was not willing to do anything he wanted. Ravana thought she would change in time. He put her there in a park, under a tree. She sat there, and around her were *rākṣasīs*. They told Sita stories of how agreeable Ravana was, how great he was. That was their job. Daily they had to tell Sita how wonderful Ravana was, how gods served him. Sita had to be indoctrinated. Slowly she had to see the glories of Ravana - when he embraces you, twenty hands will be there. Sita would not listen to any of this, and she was stuck there.

When Rama and Lakshmana came back to the camp they found the hut empty. Rama knew something like this would happen. As they both feared, they found the hut empty. They had seen the omens all along the way. Rama, beside himself, began to search for Sita; he began crying for Sita. Only here is Rama depicted as but a simple man with great love and affection for his woman, for his wife. Two things are there. One is his own duty and his sense that he should not have gone off, in spite of what Sita asked. The second thing is that he had lost her. He could not help but think of her in another's hands and how she was going to suffer. Rama's mind, his whole body, seemed to have lost all their powers. He could not even think properly. He was pleading to the trees and birds, asking if they had seen Sita. He lost his balance for the time being.

To be continued...

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