

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the twelfth part of the serial article, continuation from May 2022 newsletter.

गते तु भरते श्रीमान् सत्यसंधो जितेन्द्रियः ॥ १-१-३९

रामस्तु पुनरालक्ष्य नागरस्य जनस्य च । तत्रागमनमेकाग्रो दण्डकान् प्रविवेश ह ॥ १-१-४०

प्रविश्य तु महारण्यं रामो राजीवलोचनः । विराधं राक्षसं हत्वा शरभङ्गं ददर्श ह ॥ १-१-४१

सुतीक्ष्णं चाप्यगस्त्यं च अगस्त्यभ्रातरं तथा । अगस्त्यवचनाच्छैव जग्राहैन्द्रं शरासनम् ॥ १-१-४२

खड्गं च परमप्रीतस्तूणी चाक्षयसायकौ । १-१-४३

gate tu bharate śrīmān satyasaṅdho jitendriyaḥ || 1-1-39

rāmastu punarālakṣya nāgarasya janasya ca |

tatrāgamanamekāgro daṇḍakān praviveśa ha |1-1-40

praviśya tu mahāraṇyaṁ rāmo rājīvalocanaḥ |

virādham rākṣasaṁ hatvā śarabhaṅgaṁ dadarśa ha || 1-1-41

sutīkṣṇaṁ cāpyagastyāṁ ca agastyabhṛātaraṁ tathā |

agastyavacanācchaiṅva jagrāhaindraṁ śarāsanam || 1-1-42

khaḍgaṁ ca paramapṛītaṣṭūṇī cākṣayaśāyakaḥ |1-1-43

After Bharata was gone, Rama, the one whose senses and mind are mastered, the man of discipline, the one who is bound to truth, the one who is born to riches, the one whose mind is focused, who is not distracted from his commitment to fulfilling the words of his father, expecting that the city people will again come back to implore him, along with Sita and Lashmana, packed his few things and left Citrakuta for the dense forests of Dandakaranya. In the forest, Rama, whose eyes are as pleasing as the petals of a red lotus, and those with him are attacked by a demon, a *rākṣasa*. Rama fought with and slew the *rākṣasa*. This is the idea: good and evil all the time. Good always wins. In the forest Rama also spent time with the sages Sharabhanga and Sutikshnam, also known as Agastya and his brother. It looked as though Rama's going to the forest was not a mistake and not a threat to the kingdom. It looked as though it was all planned very well. Rama could remove all the demons and he could have the *darśana* of all the sages. To see all these wise men is a rare thing.

At the request of Agastya, Rama accepted a bow, a special abode of arrows, and two divine quivers with countless, endless, divine arrows which had been given by Indra. Tuni is the name of one of the quivers. Agastya gave these because he knew all of them would be needed later when there would be problems. Agastya being what he was, knowing what was in store, gave Rama these weapons. Highly pleased, Rama took the gifts as a blessing.

वसतस्तस्य रामस्य वने वनचरैः सह ॥ १-१-४३

ऋषयोऽभ्यागमन् सर्वे वधायासुररक्षसाम् । स तेषां प्रतिशुश्राव राक्षसानां तदा वने ॥ १-१-४४

प्रतिज्ञातश्च रामेण वधः संयति रक्षसाम् । ऋषीणामग्निकल्पानां दण्डकारण्यवासीनाम् ॥ १-१-४५

तेन तत्रैव वसता जनस्थाननिवासिनी । विरूपिता सूर्पणखा राक्षसी कामरूपिणी ॥ १-१-४६

vasatastasya rāmasya vane vanacaraiḥ saha || 1-1-43

ṛṣayo'bhyāgaman sarve vadhāyāsurarakṣasām |

sa teṣāṁ pratiśuśrāva rākṣasānāṁ tadā vane || 1-1-44

pratijñātaśca rāmeṇa vadhaḥ saṁyati rakṣasām |

ṛṣīṇāmagnikalpānāṁ daṇḍakāraṇyavāsīnām || 1-1-45

tena tatraiva vasatā janasthānanivāsīnī |

virūpitā sūrpaṇakhā rākṣasī kāmārūpiṇī || 1-1-46

Those who lived in the forests, *vanācārah*, including all the wise men, *ṛṣis*, came to know that Rama was among them. The news went round that Rama had battled and destroyed the *rākṣasa*. All those who dwelled in the forest joined and came to Rama at his camp. The sages stood in front and the others followed. They came to tell Rama of the *asuras* and *rākṣasas* in the forest. *Asuras* and *rākṣasas* are demons and devilish people - there is not much difference between them. The people came to ask Rama that these demons be disciplined or destroyed, that they be kept from disturbing the locals' rituals and their peace. The *rākṣasas* were notorious for waiting until the very last acts of the sacrifices conducted by the *brāhmaṇas*. Then the *rākṣasas* would come and extinguish the sacred fire, they would spit on it, defile it, spoiling the invocation and the sacraments, claiming the territory. The good forest people saw controlling the *rākṣasas* as the king's job, as Rama's job. It was not the sages' job because the sages were committed to *ahimsā*, and they would not strike another being. The hunters and gatherers and other

people of Dandaka ran in fear from the dangerous *rākṣasas*, and the sages, who had the powers to retaliate, would not act with violence.

Rama gave the *ṛṣis* his word that he would provide protection from the *rākṣasas*. “Let it be, *tathāstu*,” he promised the *ṛṣis*, who are pure like fire, who are pure and remain pure, who are brilliant like fire, who are powerful like fire. He gave his *pratijñā* to all those living in the Dandaka forest. It was clear that the *rākṣasas* were in trouble now. The people were happy; they knew the problem would be dealt with in time.

From the nearby Janasthana woods came Shurpanakha, a *rākṣasī*, a female demon, who could assume any form at any time. Seeing Rama and Lakshmana, these two young, strapping, strong men, she assumed the form of an attractive young woman and approached them. Lakshmana was her first target. Lakshmana is not as magnanimous as Rama. The *rākṣasī* made overtures to Lakshmana. Lakshmana abruptly cut off her nose with his sword. He knew it was Shurpanakha, the *rākṣasī*, and that she was just trying to lure him and destroy him. He did not kill her, she just lost her nose. She was furious, but still she was curious, and she went back with her damaged nose and told all her folks, the other *rākṣasas*. Even though she had assumed a form, her very nose was damaged. It is like when you cut the snake you have seen on the rope and you find that only the rope is in two pieces. She told the other *rākṣasas* how these two rogues had invaded their territory and hurt her. She encouraged them to teach these two a lesson. She roused them to action.

To be continued...

“The three conclusions – I am mortal, I am unhappy or incomplete, and I am ignorant – form the basis of all my activities. This three-fold conclusion is the problem. *Vēdānta* says this is an unwarranted problem. In the vision of *Vēdānta*, you are just the opposite of what you take yourself to be. “I am sad” is the problem and that is solved only when I see that “I” as other than sad, as free from sadness. *Vēdānta* says that “I” is free from sadness.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati