

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

*This is the ninth part of the serial article, continuation from Feb 2022 newsletter.*

स जगाम वनं वीरः प्रतिज्ञामनुपालयन् । पितुर्वचननिर्देशात् कैकेय्याः प्रियकारणात् ॥ १-१-२४

*sa jagāma vanam vīraḥ pratijñāmanupālayan ।*

*piturovacananirdeśāt kaikeyyāḥ priyakāraṇāt ॥ 1-1-24*

Brave Rama never delayed one moment. He went to the forest as if that were his place, as though he were born in the woods. He changed his dress, leaving his formal wear behind. He wore rough clothing for this rough life. No longer was he a prince; he lived in the woods as a simple person. Because of the honorable words of his father, and to please his stepmother Kaikeyi, out of sheer love, understanding her anxiety about her own future, appreciating the whole thing and not bearing any ill will toward her, seeing her in a compassionate light, and for her satisfaction, he left happily.

Even if a son's father has died a vow still stands. Even if only after his father has died the son hears that his father has made a vow, it is incumbent on the son to honor his father's words and to fulfill any promise. That is the *dharmaśāstra*. Even today, a good son, as his sacred duty, will honor his father's debts, that his father's freedom be assured.

Rama had recently married the princess Janaki, daughter of Janaka. Janaki Sita is her name. When Rama, leaving for the forest, went to take leave of her, he found his other two brothers, Lakshmana and Shatrughna, with her. When he told them of the boon and his plans, they all wanted to go with him. Lakshmana was furious and wanted them all to leave Kaikeyi behind. Soon, Shatrughna had come to know all that had happened between the old maid and Kaikeyi, and he had the old woman by the hair.

Lakshmana said, "How could Dasharatha do this? Out of infatuation for his appealing wife he gave this woman this boon. As princes, should we accept what he has done? We should do away with all of them." His anger carried him away.

Then Rama asked Lakshmana, "What are you saying? You sound like a

street boy.” Lakshmana settled down. But then he started up again. He could not contain himself. Only his love and respect and devotion for Rama, his eldest brother, allowed Lakshmana to compose himself. But Shatrughna, Lakshmana’s twin, was equally infuriated; he was uncontrollable and wanted to take action. Only Rama could control them. He calmed his brothers and made them realize their responsibilities.

When Rama said he was going, they all wanted to go. Somehow Rama convinced Shatrughna to stay and agreed that Lakshmana would accompany him to the forest. He could not leave Lakshmana behind because Lakshmana would not hear of it. To avoid any more havoc in the palace, Rama consented that one brother would go with him.

Rama wanted to leave Sita. Sita said, “What would I do here?”

“There will be danger, tigers, in the jungle.” said Rama.

“I am not worried, you will be there. What happens to you will happen to me. You will take care of the dangers, and I will come and be useful to you.” She did everything she could to convince Rama. She dressed herself exactly like Rama, in clothes suitable for the forest life. She left behind silk and saris and ornaments. She dropped everything and wore the dress of a female ascetic. Finally, Rama knew that arguing was useless; after all the negotiations, he allowed his two friends to accompany him. Lakshmana and Sita were to follow Rama to the forest.

तं व्रजन्तं प्रियो भ्राता लक्ष्मणोऽनुजगाम ह । स्नेहादœ विनयसम्पन्नः सुमित्रानन्दवर्धनः ॥ १-१-२५

भ्रातरं दयितो भ्रातुः सौभ्रात्रमनुदर्शयन् । १-१-२६

*taṁ vrajantaṁ priyo bhrātā lakṣmaṇo ’nujagāma ha |*

*snehād vinayasampannaḥ sumitrānandavardhanaḥ || 1-1-25*

*bhrātaraṁ dayito bhrātuḥ saubhrātramanudarśayan |1-1-26*

Rama went to the forest to fulfill the words of his father and to please his step-mother, Kaikeyi. Lakshmana, who was to go with him, was he who made Sumitra’s happiness grow; as her son grew, her happiness grew. More often a mother becomes concerned as her child grows. When he starts shaving, she worries. But the mothers of both Lakshmana and Rama felt their joy increase, because their sons grew according to the ideal of all that was good. In every way they were a source of joy. Day by day, all their mothers’ hopes and prayers were more

than fulfilled.

Lakshmana was the beloved brother of Rama. He was humble only with respect to his brother Rama. Lakshmana was highly disciplined, yet intolerant of injustice. Rama was endlessly accommodating; he could put himself into the shoes of another person and look at the situation. The magnitude of his accommodation was like the ocean. His compassion was such that he could never hurt a person. That was Rama's extraordinary virtue. Whereas Lakshmana was always in his own shoes. If he felt that another person had done something wrong, he was not burdened by accommodation. It was only his own discipline kept him from doing wrong. That is Lakshmana. Strong, brave, and righteous, he is a little less. Only Rama was like Rama in terms of empathy. Out of sheer devotion, love, and respect born of their lives lived together since their births moments apart, showing his brotherly affection, Lakshmana followed Rama.

रामस्य दयिता भार्या नित्यं प्राणसमा हिता ॥ १-१-२६

जनकस्य कुले जाता देवमायेव निर्मिता । सर्वलक्षणसम्पन्ना नारीणामुत्तमा वधूः ॥ १-१-२७

सीताप्यनुगता रामं शशिनं रोहिणी यथा । १-१-२८

*rāmasya dayitā bhāryā nityaṁ prāṇasamā hitā ॥ 1-1-26*

*janakasya kule jātā devamāyeva nirmitā ।*

*sarvalakṣaṇasampannā nārīṇāmuttamā vadhūḥ ॥ 1-1-27*

*sītāpyanugatā rāmaṁ śaśinaṁ rohiṇī yathā ॥ 1-1-28*

Sita, the beloved wife of Rama, as inseparable as his very breath, always pleasing to him and always doing good for him, whom he wanted always by his side, who did what was to be done and would not do what was not to be done, who was found as a baby and raised by Janaka, whose body was like the body that Goddess Maya would assume, who was embellished with all the characteristics of the most virtuous woman, who was exactly as a woman should be according to the *sāstra*, who was the woman that all women would emulate, followed her husband all the way like the star Rohini that is always found with the moon.

*To be continued ...*