

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

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स जगाम वनं वीरो रामपादप्रसादकः ॥ १-१-३४

गत्वा तु स महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् । अयाचदœ भ्रातरं राममार्यभावपुरस्कृतः ॥ १-१-३५

त्वमेव राजा धर्मज्ञ इति रामं वचोऽब्रवीत् । रामोऽपि परमोदारः सुमुखः सुमहायशाः ॥ १-१-३६

न चैच्छत् पितुरादेशादœ राज्यं रामो महाबलः । पादुके चास्य राज्याय न्यासं दत्त्वा पुनः पुनः ॥ १-१-३७

निवर्तयामास ततो भरतं भरताग्रजः । स काममनवाप्यैव रामपादावुपस्पृशन् ॥ १-१-३८

sa jagāma vanam vīro rāmapādaprasādakah || 1-1-34

gatvā tu sa mahātmānam rāmaṁ satyaparākramam |

ayācad bhrātaram rāmamāryabhāvapuraskṛtaḥ || 1-1-35

tvameva rājā dharmajña iti rāmaṁ vaco 'bravīt |

rāmo'pi paramodāraḥ sumukhaḥ sumahāyaśāḥ || 1-1-36

na caicchat piturādeśād rājyaṁ rāmo mahābalaḥ |

pāduke cāsya rājyāya nyāsaṁ dattoā punaḥ punaḥ || 1-1-37

nivartayāmāsa tato bharataṁ bharatāgrajaḥ |

sa kāmamanavāpyaiva rāmapādāvupasprśan || 1-1-38

When Dasharatha died, Bharata was appointed king, as Rama had declared. The panel of court advisors in Ayodhya approached Bharata and asked him to be the king until Rama returned. The strong-willed and strong-armed Bharata had no desire to have this kingdom. He, brave Bharata, who sought the blessing of the feet of Rama, went to the forest. His intention at first was to bring back Rama. But he knew that Rama would not return, no matter how he pleaded. He decided that he would get Rama's sandals, and he would rule in the name of Rama with the sandals as symbol of his brother's presence. This is how the tradition goes even today. Still, Bharata dreamed he could beg his brother to come back. Bharata knew that Rama could not say no to someone who had surrendered to him. Bharata thought he could persuade Rama.

Among those who deserve to be worshipped, Bharata deserves to be named first. Bharata went to Guha, who was now angry that the kingdom had lost Rama. Guha, the hunter, thought Bharata had brought this all about to gain the kingdom. Guha thought Bharata might pursue Rama and try to finish him off. Guha decided to fight with Bharata. But when he met and listened to Bharata, he helped him cross the river, and he told him where to find Rama in Citrakuta. Reaching Rama, Bharata approached the *mahātmā*, this man committed to truth, his brother. He

begged his brother, “O *dharmajña*, you should be the ruler. I am but a child. What do I know about ruling a kingdom? My mother committed a mistake and now she realizes it and now you should come back. Whatever punishment is deserved by the people who caused this banishment we will take care of. Please come back.” He went on and on. “You are the one who knows *dharma*; you know the *sāstra*, and the people, and the ways of administration. A king must be a *dharmarāja*; you alone should be the king.” These words were said, and they made a strong argument.

Rama, who does not reject anybody who comes to him, who will redress the other’s difficulties, a man of spontaneous compassion, ever cheerful, whose fame for doing good is well deserved, whose renown echoes through the family of Raghu into which he was born, a man of great strength that is for justice, who makes others happy, in whom others revel, said, “Because of my father’s command, I definitely will not accept the rule of the kingdom. Even if Dasharatha is no longer alive, even if Kaikeyi sees her mistake, even, Bharata, with your argument that I should rule, my mind is committed to fulfilling the words of my father.”

Bharata said, “I cannot rule the kingdom; I cannot sit on the throne; it is just not possible. Even, dear brother, your saying that I should go and rule cannot make me. I will never sit on that throne. I will return only because you command me.” There again, emotion served *dharma*, duty. Bharata would prefer to join Lakshmana and stay with Rama, but Rama would not allow it. To ensure that the kingdom had a fit leader, Rama commanded that Bharata return and rule.

Bharata asked for his brother’s sandals and said, “These will rule; I will be only a *nimitta*, an instrument.”

“Padukasahasram” is a thousand verse poem in complex Sanskrit by a famous poet, Vedantadeshika, about this taking of the sandals by Bharata. Bharata took the sandals back to the city and built himself a simple cottage on the outskirts of the city where he lived like an ascetic. He constructed an altar and kept the *pāduka* there. It was the sandals that ruled from the altar. Bharata was the ruler, but his attitude was that Rama was the king and that he, Bharata, was an instrument of his elder brother. Never was there a thought on Bharata’s part that he was the king, and yet he was an excellent leader and a just ruler. Never letting go of the sandals, surrendering at the feet of his brother Rama, filled with his desire for Rama to return, Bharata ruled the kingdom from the hut in Nandigrama. The characterization of Bharata is the beauty here.

To be continued...