

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
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जनकस्य वचः श्रुत्वा विश्वामित्रो महामुनिः । धनुर्दर्शय रामाय इति होवाच पार्थिवम् ॥ १-६७-१
ततः स राजा जनकः सचिवान् व्यादिदेश ह । धनुरानीयतां दिव्यं गन्धमाल्यानुलेपितम् ॥ १-६७-२
जनकेन समादिष्टाः सचिवाः प्राविशन् पुरम् । तद्धनुः पुरतः कृत्वा निर्जग्मुरमितौजसः ॥ १-६७-३
नृणां शतानि पञ्चाशदœ व्यायतानां महात्मनाम् । मञ्जूषामष्टचक्रां तां समूहुस्ते कथंचन ॥ १-६७-४
तामादाय सुमञ्जूषामायसीं यत्र तदœ धनुः । सुरोपमं ते जनकमूचुर्नृपतिमन्त्रिणः ॥ १-६७-५
इदं धनुर्वरं राजन् पूजितं सर्वराजभिः । मिथिलाधिप राजेन्द्र दर्शनीयं यदिच्छसि ॥ १-६७-६
तेषां नृपो वचः श्रुत्वा कृताञ्जलिरभाषत । विश्वामित्रं महात्मानं तावुभौ रामलक्ष्मणौ ॥ १-६७-७
इदं धनुर्वरं ब्रह्मन् जनकैरभिपूजितम् । राजभिश्च महावीर्यैरशक्तैः पूरितं तदा ॥ १-६७-८
नैतत् सुरगणाः सर्वे सासुरा न च राक्षसाः । गन्धर्वयक्षप्रवराः सकिंनरमहोरगाः ॥ १-६७-९
क्व गतिर्मानुषाणां च धनुषोऽस्य प्रपूरणे । आरोपणे समायोगे वेपने तोलने तथा ॥ १-६७-१०
तदेतत् धनुषां श्रेष्ठमानीतं मुनिपुंगव । दशयैतन्महाभाग अनयोः राजपुत्रयोः ॥ १-६७-११
विश्वामित्रः सरामस्तु श्रुत्वा जनकभाषितम् । वत्स राम धनुः पश्य इति राघवमब्रवीत् ॥ १-६७-१२

janakasya vacaḥ śrutvā viśvāmitro mahāmuniḥ |
dhanurdarśaya rāmāya iti hovāca pārthivam || 1-67-1
tataḥ sa rājā janakaḥ sacivān vyādideśa ha |
dhanurānīyatām divyaṁ gandhamālyānulepitam || 1-67-2
janakena samādiṣṭāḥ sacivāḥ prāviśan puram |
taddhanuḥ purataḥ kṛtvā nirjagmuramitaujasaḥ || 1-67-3
nṛṇāṁ śatāni pañcāśad vyāyatānāṁ mahātmanām |
mañjūṣāmaṣṭacakraṁ tāṁ samūhuste kathañcana || 1-67-4
tāmādāya sumañjūṣāmāyasīm yatra tad dhanuḥ |
suropamaṁ te janakamūcurnṛpatimantriṇaḥ || 1-67-5
idaṁ dhanurovaraṁ rājan pūjitaṁ sarvarājabhiḥ |
mithilādhipa rājendra darśanīyaṁ yadicchasi || 1-67-6
teṣāṁ nṛpo vacaḥ śrutvā kṛtāñjalirabhāṣata |
viśvāmitraṁ mahātmanāṁ tāvubhau rāmalakṣmaṇau || 1-67-7
idaṁ dhanurovaraṁ brahman janakairabhipūjitaṁ |
rājabhiśca mahāvīryairasaktaiḥ pūritaṁ tadā || 1-67-8
naitat suragaṇāḥ sarve sāsura na ca rākṣasāḥ |
gandharvayakṣapraravāḥ sakinnaramahoraḡāḥ || 1-67-9
kva gatirmānuṣāṇāṁ ca dhanuṣo'sya prapūraṇe |

āropane samāyoge vepane tolane tathā || 1-67-10

tadetat dhanuṣāṁ śreṣṭhamānītaṁ munipuṅgava |

darśayaitanmahābhāga anayoḥ rājaputrayoḥ || 1-67-11

viśvāmitraḥ sarāmastu śrutvā janakabhāṣitam |

vatsa rāma dhanuḥ paśya iti rāghavamabravīt || 1-67-12

Janaka, having heard of Rama's feats, had a small ray of hope. This boy seemed all he could wish for in a husband for his daughter. If Rama could actually set an arrow to this bow, the king had found a match for Sita, the one who was not born of a womb. Vishvamitra said, "Show Rama this bow." King Janaka ordered his men to apply sandalpaste to the bow, to garland the god-given bow, and to bring it. Then the party proceeded to the place where the bow would be shown. Ahead of them, five thousand fellows, men used to hard work, solid fellows, weight-lifters, muscled and stout, somehow managed to place the great bow in an iron box on an eight-wheeled cart and struggled to roll it through Janaka's palace.

King Janaka addressed Vishvamitra who had Rama and Lakshmana by his side. "Please look, *brāhmaṇas*, this is something to see. Over the years this bow has been reached for by many kings and princes. It has been worshipped and respected by our family as long as it has been ours to keep. This is that bow. To bend it, to set an arrow and send it flying, one must first tie this bow. The *devas* themselves have tried, celestials of all kinds have tried, the *rākṣasas* have tried, not to mention human beings." Janaka has some doubts because many, many contenders had gone before. Janaka turned to Rama, seeing in him but a boy, "Please see this Dhanus." Rama and Lakshmana had been getting restless, waiting for these words. The box was opened and Rama peered inside.

महर्षेर्वचनाद॰ रामो यत्र तिष्ठति तद॰ धनुः । मञ्जूषां तामपावृत्य दृष्ट॰वा धनुरथाब्रवीत् ॥ १-६७-१३

इदं धनुर्वरं दिव्यं संस्पृशामीह पाणिना । यत्नवांश्च भविष्यामि तोलने पूरणेऽपि वा ॥ १-६७-१४

बाढमित्यब्रविद॰ राजा मुनिश्च समभाषत । लीलया स धनुर्मध्ये जग्राह वचनात्मुनेः ॥ १-६७-१५

पश्यतां नृसहस्राणां बहूनां रघुनन्दनः । आरोपयत् स धर्मात्मा सलीलमिव तद्धनुः ॥ १-६७-१६

आरोपयित्वा मौर्वी च पूरयामास तद्धनुः । तद॰ बभञ्ज धनुर्मध्ये नरश्रेष्ठो महायशाः ॥ १-६७-१७

तस्य शब्दो महानासीन्निर्घातसमनिःस्वनः । भूमिकम्पश्च सुमहान् पर्वतस्येव दीर्यतः ॥ १-६७-१८

निपेतुश्च नराः सर्वे तेन शब्देन मोहिताः । वर्जयित्वा मुनिवरं राजानं तौ च राघवौ ॥ १-६७-१९

प्रत्याश्वस्तो जने तस्मिन् राजा विगतसाध्वसः । उवाच प्राञ्जलिर्वाक्यं वाक्यज्ञो मुनिपुंगवम् ॥ १-६७-२०

maharṣervacanād rāmo yatra tiṣṭhati tad dhanuḥ |

mañjūṣāṁ tāmapāvṛtya dṛṣṭvā dhanurathābravīt || 1-67-13

idaṁ dhanurvarāṁ divyaṁ saṁspṛśāmīha paṇinā |

yatnavāmsca bhaviṣyāmi tolane pūraṇe'pi vā || 1-67-14
bādhamityabravīd rājā muniśca samabhāṣata |
līlayā sa dhanurmadhye jagrāha vacanātmuneḥ || 1-67-15
paśyatām nṛsahasrānām bahūnām raghunandanah |
āropayat sa dharmātmā salīlamiva taddhanuḥ || 1-67-16
āropayitvā maurvīm ca pūrayāmāsa taddhanuḥ |
tad babhañja dhanurmadhye naraśreṣṭho mahāyaśāḥ || 1-67-17
tasya śabdo mahānāsīnnirghātasamaniḥsvanaḥ |
bhūmikampaśca sumahān parvatasyeva dīryataḥ || 1-67-18
nipetuśca narāḥ sarve tena śabdena mohitāḥ |
varjayitvā munivaram rājānam tau ca rāghavau || 1-67-19
pratyāśvasto jane tasmin rājā vigatasādhvasaḥ |
uvāca prāñjaliroākyaṁ vākyañño munipuṅgavam || 1-67-20

“Whaa!” Rama said. “Now with my own hand I am touching this sacred bow. I will try to lift it and string it and fire it.” The problem was, if he did lift it he had to marry. He turned to Vishvamitra and Janaka for permission. “Do you think I am the one to be your son-in-law?” Vishvamitra and Janaka, as one, gave their approval. Rarely is this Dhanus brought for *darśana*, and already Maithila’s people had come to know the Dhanus had been brought forth. They had heard of this Prince Rama and his exploits and the fate of the *rākṣasas* he encountered. A large crowd had assembled, and in the middle were the mighty bow and the prince.

“I wish he were a little more grown up,” they murmured and gossiped. “He is too young, I think.” All because it was a big thing, and a very big thing in their kingdom. All eyes and ears were on Rama now.

Rama, the great joy of the Raghava family, received the okay from the *ṛṣis*, and as though playing with a lily stalk, lifted the sublime and potent bow from the iron box. He set its point near him to tie its string, and leaning in easily, he bent the bow. The bow broke in two. It happened quickly. Such a crack had never been heard, like great thunder from heaven, like an earthquake had caused the mountains to fall. Vishvamitra and Janaka and Rama and Lakshmana stood the sound, but all the other thousands were laid low and actually lost consciousness for a bit. Such was that bow. King Janaka was not sad about losing that bow, in fact he was happy. He was happy that Shiva’s Dhanus had been waiting only for Sita’s marriage. The bow had done its job; it had brought Rama for his Sita. Janaka was all joy, and his people were awestruck – at last a husband for their princess.

To be continued...