

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

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Bāla Kāṇḍa

तपःस्वाध्यायनिरतं तपस्वी वाग्विदां वरम् । नारदं परिपप्रच्छ वाल्मीकिमुनिपुंगवम् ॥ १-१-१

tapasvādhyāyaniratam tapasvī vāgvidāṃ varam |

nāradam paripapraccha vālmīkirmunipuṅgavam || 1-1-1

This is considered to be a very beautiful handling of Sanskrit poetry. All others draw inspiration from this work. In grammar, in *sandhi*, in *samāsa*, it is complete and exemplary. The style is easy and yet masterful. That is why it is considered to be a very great *kāvya*.

Niratam is second case, accusative, like *rāmam*. It is not the subject; the subject should be nominative. All the words ending in *-am* are objects. Two words are in the nominative: *tapasvī* and *vālmīkiḥ*. *Tapasvī* is an adjective modifying that *vālmīki*. *Tapasvī* means a great ascetic, a person of great control, discipline, and sacrifice. That is what our robber turned into - an integrated person. All he required was a change of vision and a conversion. Narada changed the fellow's scale of values, and you find Valmiki transformed. Why? Because his case was one of ignorance, want of light. When he was convinced, he was a different person. He was a whole person with no split, no conflicts whatsoever. From the time of his conversion onwards he was a *sādhu*. That was Valmiki.

By his meditation, Valmiki became a *tapasvī*. *Paripaḥ praccha* - he asked. Valmiki asked a wonderful question. If he had not asked, Ramayana would not have come. Properly, with great humility, he asked. You ask this way when you approach an elderly person, a respected person. There is a method of asking. He did *namaskāra*, and afterwards he asked if he could ask a question. Taking permission from Narada, Valmiki asked Narada this question. All the words in the accusative are appellations for Narada. What kind of Naradam? *Tapass-*

vādhyāyaniratam: He is one who revels in *tapas*, in a life of contemplation, of thinking, of inquiry, of thinking in terms of God, and who revels in *svādhyāya*, study of the Vedas. *Niratam* comes from *ram* again. Narada is one who is always a student of the Vedas. He commits himself to that study and is not interested in anything else. He was a sage.

To contemplate you must have material - it is not just closing the eyes. Narada studied daily, and he contemplated on that which he studied. *Vāgvidām va-ram*: Among the people who know the *vāk*, who are masters of words, of Vedas, he is *varah*, the most exalted. Among the people of letters, the educated people, he was a great master. *Munipuṅgavam*: He is a man who is able to be with himself, who is able to reflect, who takes in all that is there, who tries to assimilate any knowledge gathered. He was a saintly person.

को न्वस्मिन् साम्प्रतं लोके गुणवान् कश्च वीर्यवान् । धर्मज्ञश्च कृतज्ञश्च सत्य वाक्यो धृढव्रतः ॥ १-१-२

चारित्र्येण च को युक्तः सर्वभूतेषु को हितः । विद्वान् कः कः समर्थश्च कश्चैकप्रियदर्शनः ॥ १-१-३

आत्मवान् को जितक्रोधो द्युतिमान् कोऽनसूयकः । कस्य बिभ्यति देवाश्च जातरोषस्य संयुगे ॥ १-१-४

एतदिच्छाम्यहं श्रोतुं परं कौतूहलं हि मे । महर्षे त्वं समर्थोऽसि ज्ञातुमेवं विधं नरम् ॥ १-१-५

ko nvasmin sāmpratam loke guṇavān kaśca vīryavān |

dharmajñāśca kṛtajñāśca satya vākya dhr̥ḍhavrataḥ || 1-1-2

cāritreṇa ca ko yuktaḥ sarvabhūteṣu ko hitaḥ |

vidvān kaḥ kaḥ samarthaśca kaścaikapriyadarśanaḥ || 1-1-3

ātmavān ko jitakrodho dyutimān ko'nasūyakaḥ |

kasya bibhyati devāśca jātaroṣasya saṁyuge || 1-1-4

etadicchāmyaham śrotuṁ param kautūhalaṁ hi me |

maharṣe tvam samartha'si jñātumevaṁ vidham naram || 1-1-5

Valmiki asked Narada this question in the following *śloka*. "I desire to hear. Please tell me if there is one in this world at this time who is *guṇavān*, who has all those virtuous qualities, who has all those good values." You may think that you

live in difficult times, but you can see from this question that it is always the same - even thousands of years ago. Is there such a fellow? Who is that one who is *vīryavān*, brave and strong, a man of great physical and mental strength? Who is he with that bodily strength and that inner strength, that moral strength? Who is the one in whom these rare qualities come together? Who is the *dharmajñāh*, a man of *dharma*, a man to whom knowledge of what is right comes straight. He need not think twice when there is a choice to be made; he cannot do a wrong thing. The *dharmajñā* is like a musician with perfect pitch - he knows immediately when there is a wrong note. He need not be told.

Who is the *kṛtajñāh*, the one who never forgets when a good deed has been done for him. He has that natural gratitude. He remembers even the smallest thing, and he pays it back. Sanskrit literature speaks of the coconut tree. The young tree needs to be watered for the first year or two - especially in the summer. Even waste water is good enough to keep the young plant alive. Once the tree starts growing, it goes up and up. Respectfully carrying the water you gave it on its head, it turns the dirty water into the purest, sweet water and keeps it safe in the nut. Then it gives it back to you, and it keeps on giving. It is very grateful, and it never forgets you for the sixty years of its life. That coconut tree is a *kṛtajñāh*.

Satyavākya: His words are always true. He lives up to those words, and he means what he says. *Dṛḍhavṛtaḥ*: when he makes a resolution, nobody is going to change that resolve. No god can change that resolve. Only if he decides to change does it change. His resolve is not adamant; if things go wrong, he can and will change. Who is that person? Is there a person like that, a man endowed with a history that is not a tragedy? His life should be punctuated with accomplishments - pleasant to hear and pleasant to tell. Everyone's story is a tragedy, an interesting tragedy. But is there a person whose achievements are unmatched and worthy of retelling, whose story all can learn from?

This man may be good, he may know right from wrong, but that is not

enough. He should be a *vidvān*. He should not have to go to a neighbor if he needs a letter read or written. He should be a *paṇḍita*, a scholar. He should be *samartha* - smart, skilled, and capable. His powers of accomplishment should measure up to the desired expectation. He should be able to rise to the occasion. He never buckles or ducks. Each time he is challenged by a more difficult situation he rises up to it. *Ekapriyadarśana*: Whenever you see him, his form is supremely pleasing. He is bright and cheerful in the morning, and he is not moody or mopey at the end of the day. His appearance is always uniformly pleasing to your eyes; his demeanor and disposition never flag.

Ātmavān: He is well coordinated, adroit; his reflexes are alert, and he has no regrets once he makes his move. There is nothing loose about him. *Jitakrodha*: He has mastered his anger. Anger cannot take him for a ride. He is together as a person, well integrated. He is a clean person. *Dyutimān*: He has brilliance. *Anasūyaka*: He is free from envy. He appreciates and does not covet the possessions of others. *Jātarōṣa*: In him the sense of righting wrong is born and roused. Even the gods should fear that fellow. In battle he has no equal, and any who stand against him should tremble.

Valmiki said, "I would like to know the sort of a person like this. I am eager to hear of the life of a person like that. I have not seen such a person. But you, oh Narada, are a great traveler. You must have seen such a fellow. Hey, *mahārṣi*, you who knows, who is wise and great thereby, you are the one capable of knowing such a person. Do not tell me of a god, tell me of a man who has all this and is here on this earth. Have you ever seen such a man?"

To be continued...