

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the twenty sixth part of the serial article, continuation from Sep 2023 newsletter.

तां तेन रुधिरौघेण वेदीं वीक्ष्य समुक्षिताम् । सहसाभिद्रुतो रामस्तानपश्यत् ततो दिवि ॥ १-३०-१३
तावापतन्तौ सहसा दृष्ट्वा राजीवलोचनः । लक्ष्मणं त्वभिसम्प्रेक्ष्य रामो वचनमब्रवीत् ॥ १-३०-१४
पश्य लक्ष्मण दुर्वृत्तान् राक्षसान् पिशिताशनान् । मानवास्त्रसमाधूताननिलेन यथा घनान् ॥ १-३०-१५
करिष्यामि न संदेहो नोत्सहे हन्तुमीदृशान् । इत्युक्त्वा वचनं रामश्चापे संधाय वेगवान् ॥ १-३०-१६
मानवं परमोदारमस्त्रं परमभास्वरम् । चिक्षेप परमक्रुद्धो मारीचोरसि राघवः ॥ १-३०-१७
स तेन परमास्त्रेण मानवेन समाहितः । संपूर्णं योजनशतं क्षिप्तः सागरसम्प्लवे ॥ १-३०-१८

tām tena rudhiraugheṇa vedīm vīkṣya samukṣitām |
sahasābhidruto rāmastānapaśyat tato divi || 1-30-13
tāvāpatantau sahasā dṛṣṭvā rājīvalocanaḥ |
lakṣmaṇam tvabhisamprekṣya rāmo vacanamabravīt || 1-30-14
paśya lakṣmaṇa durvṛttān rākṣasān piśitāśanān |
mānavāstrasamādhūtānanilena yathā ghanān || 1-30-15
karīṣyāmi na sandeho notsahe hantumīdṛśān |
ityuktvā vacanam rāmaścāpe sandhāya vegavān || 1-30-16
mānavam paramodāramastraṁ paramabhāsvaram |
cikṣepa paramakruddho mārīcorasi rāghavaḥ || 1-30-17
sa tena paramāstreṇa mānavena samāhitaḥ |
sampūrṇam yojanaśataṁ kṣiptaḥ sāgarasamplave || 1-30-18

Then came the sign that the demons had come. Blood and meat were dropping into the ritual fire. Marica and Subahu, along with their unhappy friends had come. Rama, he of gleaming eyes, seeing the pollution of the sacred fire, called Lakshmana's attention to the actions of the *rākṣasas* whose behavior is always wrong, those meat-gobblers. "Watch as I take them out with my *mānavāstra*. Let's see what this arrow can do. They should be blown away into space as if clouds hit by a stiff breeze." The never-failing *mānavāstra* was drawn and released, and it

thumped into Marica's chest. Without being killed, Marica was carried away eight hundred miles where he was deposited in the ocean. This is the same Marica who, having been struck thus, will advise the *rākṣasa* king Ravana not to approach Rama in the Dandaka forest. Marica survived Rama's first arrow, and he had gained first hand experience of Rama's power. It was Rama's home run. The princely brothers finished off the rest of the *asuras* and sent them off. Never again did these demons dare to invade Vishvamitra's rituals.

अथ तां रजनीं तत्र कृतार्थौ रामलक्षणौ । १-३१-१

इमौ स्म मुनिशार्दूल किंकरौ समुपगतौ । आज्ञापय मुनिश्रेष्ठ शासनं करवाव किम् ॥ १-३१-४

एवमुक्ते तयोर्वाक्यं सर्व एव महर्षयः । विश्वामित्रं पुरस्कृत्य रामं वचनमब्रुवन् ॥ १-३१-५

मैथिलस्य नरश्रेष्ठ जनकस्य भविष्यति । यज्ञः परमधर्मिष्ठस्तत्र यास्यामहे वयम् ॥ १-३१-६

त्वं चैव नरशार्दूल सहास्माभिर्गमिष्यसि । अद्भुतं च धनूरत्नं तत्र त्वं द्रष्टुमर्हसि ॥ १-३१-७

तद्धि पूर्वं नरश्रेष्ठ दत्तं सदसि दैवतैः । अप्रमेयबलं घोरं मखे परमभास्वरम् ॥ १-३१-८

नास्य देवा न गन्धर्वा नासुरा न च राक्षसाः । कर्तुमारोपणं शक्ता न कथंचन मानुषाः ॥ १-३१-९

धनुषस्तस्य वीर्यं हि जिज्ञासन्तो महिक्षितः । न शेकुरारोपयितुं राजपुत्रा महाबलाः ॥ १-३१-१०

तद्धनुर्नरशार्दूल मैथिलस्य महात्मनः । तत्र द्रक्ष्यसि काकुत्स्थ यज्ञे च परमाद्भुतम् ॥ १-३१-११

atha tāṁ rajanīm tatra kṛtārthau rāmalakṣaṇau | 1-31-1

imau sma munisārdūla kiṅkarau samupagatau |

ājñāpaya munisreṣṭha śāsanam karavāva kim || 1-31-4

evamukte tayorvākyaṁ sarva eva maharṣayaḥ |

viśvāmitraṁ puraskṛtya rāmaṁ vacanamabruvan || 1-31-5

maithilasya naraśreṣṭha janakasya bhaviṣyati |

yajñāḥ paramadharmiṣṭhastatra yāsyāmahe vayam || 1-31-6

tvaṁ caiva naraśārdūla sahāsmābhīrgamiṣyasi |

adbhutaṁ ca dhanūratnaṁ tatra tvaṁ draṣṭumarhasi || 1-31-7

taddhi pūrvaṁ naraśreṣṭha dattaṁ sadasi daivataiḥ |

aprameyabalaṁ ghoram makhe paramabhāsvaram || 1-31-8

nāsya devā na gandharvā nāsura na ca rākṣasāḥ |

kartumāropanam śaktā na kathañcana mānuṣāḥ || 1-31-9

dhanuṣastasya vīryam hi jijñāsanto mahikṣitaḥ |

na śekurāropayitum rājaputrā mahābalāḥ || 1-31-10

taddhanurnaraśārdūla maithilasya mahātmanaḥ |

tatra drakṣyasi kākutstha yajñe ca paramādbhutam || 1-31-11

Vishvamitra completed his *dikṣā*, and coming out from that he saw all that had happened. He was happy to see that what was to be done had been done. That night Rama and Lakshmana slept soundly. In the morning, Rama, thinking of going home, approached Vishvamitra, “We two who will do any job stand before you now. We are ready to do all you ask, to the fulfillment of your desire.”

Vishvamitra and the *mahārṣis* who were leaving the site of the ritual said to Rama, “Hey, we are going to Mithila, the royal city of King Janaka, for a great *yajña*. There we will see all the *devatās* at the end of the sacrifice. You should come along with us.” For these two youngsters the lions and tigers and *rākṣasas* had all been fun. A *yajña* might not be such an attraction.

To seal the deal, the *ṛṣis* said, “There is one thing that you will be interested in. There you two will see a great bow, a wondrous bow, a bow that is carried by an eight-wheeled cart, by a truck. It is truly a divine bow one must see to believe. The *yajña* will be great too.”

“Aha,” said the boys, “Let us go. We must see that bow.”

Off they went, across rivers and mountains, toward the city of Mithila. One morning they came to the river Ganga where they bathed in the holy mother of all waters. Then, having settled for a bit, Rama asked Vishvamitra the story of Ganga, the river that flows through the three worlds.

In the far North there stands the king of mountains, rich with jewels and minerals. Ganga is one of two daughters of Himavan, the deity of the great mountain. Her sister is Uma. The *devas*, seeing in Ganga the solution to their wishes, asked Himavan to give her to them. Himavan sent her forth as the mighty river

coursing through heaven, the earth, and that which is between them. His other daughter, Uma, bright and formidable with the fruit of severe *tapas*, was given to Lord Rudra, to Shiva. Ganga, being lifted into the sky by the gods, created space for all moving things and for the *devas* who spirited her away to heaven. In the heavens, in the form of Mandakini, she is the luminous Milky Way. On earth she is the sacred river that nourishes with knowledge and removes all impurity.

निष्पन्दास्तरवः सर्वे निलीना मृगपक्षिणः । नैशेन तमसा व्याप्ता दिशश्च रघुनन्दन ॥ १-३४-१५

शनैर्विसृज्यते संध्या नभो नेत्रैरिवावृतम् । नक्षत्रतारागहनं ज्योतिर्भिरवभासते ॥ १-३४-१६

उत्तिष्ठते च शीतांशुः शशी लोकतमोनुदः । ह्लादयन् प्राणिनां लोके मनांसि प्रभया स्वया ॥ १-३४-१७

नैशानि सर्वभूतानि प्रचरन्ति ततस्ततः । यक्षराक्षससंघाश्च रौद्राश्च पिशिताशनाः ॥ १-३४-१८

एवमुक्त्वा महातेजा विरराम महामुनिः । साधु साध्विति ते सर्वे मुनयो ह्यभ्यपूजयन् ॥ १-३४-१९

niṣpandāstaravaḥ sarve nilīnā mṛgapakṣiṇaḥ |

naiśena tamasā vyāptā diśaśca raghunandana || 1-34-15

śanairovisṛjyate sandhyā nabho netrairivāvṛtam |

nakṣatratārāgahanam jyotirbhiravabhāstate || 1-34-16

uttiṣṭhate ca śītānśuḥ śaśī lokatamonudah |

hlādayan prāṇinām loke manānsi prabhayā svayā || 1-34-17

naiśāni sarvabhūtāni pracaranti tatastataḥ |

yakṣarākṣasasaṅghāśca raudrāśca piśitāśanaḥ || 1-34-18

evamuktvā mahātejā virarāma mahāmuniḥ |

sādhu sādhviti te sarve munayo hyabhyapūjayan || 1-34-19

During one stopover the travelers spent in the forest, Vishvamitra spoke to them of the beauty of the forest night. He said, “The mighty trees stand as though sentinels in motionless meditation. The gentle animals and birds are quiet, each in his or her own place. All the forest-dwellers are absorbed in the closing silence. The four quarters are painted with the nighttime magic brush. Slowly the last part of the day moves away to the west. Starry constellations and planets shine like sparkling cat’s eyes. The moon, as though meant to dispel the darkness in the world, rises with cool glistening rays, pleasing people by bringing a certain emo-

tion to their hearts. It is good to know and embrace the darkness for what it is, for there one spends half of life. Even in darkness the light of knowledge shines for those who know the whole. Who is out walking the earth at night? The dark-light predators, lions and tigers, and the *rākṣasas* who are even worse beasts." All in the entourage, after praising Vishvamitra's description of the night, went to sleep.

Further along, the group came to a delightful woodsy spot about which Rama asked Vishvamitra. Vishvamitra told the story of the sage Gautama and his wife Ahalya who use to abide there. Vishvamitra said, "Lord Indra happened to come by that place and was fascinated by Ahalya. The daunting Indra assumed the form of Ahalya's husband and courted her. Later, as Indra was leaving, the real Gautama happened to come back. The soap opera. Gautama knew what was up, and Ahalya did too. Gautama cursed his wife, saying, 'You will remain here, invisible, until the feet of Rama come to this place. Only then can you again come back to me.'"

Rama's visit marked the end of the curse. At the end of Vishvamitra's story, Gautama and Ahalya appeared before Rama and his fellow travelers. Rama's presence reunited Gautama and Ahalya, and the young couple bowed to Lord Rama and blessed him and began again their journey together. Rama's commitment to bring peace to the forest and the *ṛṣis* moved ahead toward fulfillment.

The beautiful city Mithila was ruled at that time by sage King Janaka, a *rājaṛṣi*. Even today in the Vedantic tradition, Janaka is cited as a wise man who engaged in the world. As a ruler he had all the attendant problems, at the same time he was a wise man. He is cited as an example of how wisdom does not stand opposed to *karma*, activity. Neither does activity produce wisdom nor does it destroy wisdom. Janaka's daughter was Sita. The band of travelers having arrived, King Janaka was informed the *mahāṛṣi* Vishvamitra was there. When he came to greet the *ṛṣi*, the *yajña* had twelve more days to completion. "O Vishvamitra, my *yajña* is already successful because of your *darśana*." The king then saw the brilliant boys and asked about them.

भगवन् स्वागतं तेऽस्तु किं करोमि तवानघ । भवानाज्ञापयतु मामाज्ञाप्यो भवता ह्यहम् ॥ १-६६-३

एवमुक्तः स धर्मात्मा जनकेन महात्मना । प्रत्युवाच मुनिश्रेष्ठो वाक्यं वाक्यविशारदः ॥ १-६६-४

पुत्रौ दशरथस्येमौ क्षत्रियौ लोकविश्रुतौ । द्रष्टुकामौ धनुःश्रेष्ठं यदेतत्त्वयि तिष्ठति ॥ १-६६-५

एतदœ दर्शय भद्रं ते कृतकामौ नृपात्मजौ । दर्शनादस्य धनुषो यथेष्टं प्रतियास्यतः ॥ १-६६-६

एवमुक्तस्तु जनकः प्रत्युवाच महामुनिम् । श्रूयतामस्य धनुषो यदर्थमिह तिष्ठति ॥ १-६६-७

bhagavan svāgataṁ te'stu kiṁ karomi tavānagha |

bhavānājñāpayatu māmājñāpyo bhavatā hyaham || 1-66-3

evamuktaḥ sa dharmātmā janakena mahātmanā |

pratyuvāca munirśreṣṭho vākyaṁ vākyaaviśāradaḥ || 1-66-4

putrau daśarathasyemau kṣatriyau lokaviśrutau |

draṣṭukāmau dhanuḥśreṣṭham yadetattvayi tiṣṭhati || 1-66-5

etad darśaya bhadrāṁ te kṛtakāmau nṛpātmaḥ |

darśanādasya dhanuṣo yatheṣṭāṁ pratiyāsyataḥ || 1-66-6

evamuktastu janakaḥ pratyuvāca mahāmunim |

śrūyatāmasya dhanuṣo yadarthamiha tiṣṭhati || 1-66-7

“These are the sons of Dasharatha, by name Rama and Lakshmana, *kṣatriyas*,” explained Vishvamitra. “They came to me to protect my *vrata*. They took care of the evil Tataka and Marica and Subahu for me. They have accompanied me to your city. They would like to see the great bow. They are both fine archers, interested in this bow gained by the grace of Lord Shiva.” The great-soul Janaka, he who always knew whereof he spoke, welcomed the princes and the other sages and put himself at the service of Vishvamitra. In the boys he saw a possible match for his daughter. That was Vishvamitra’s idea too. Vishvamitra told Janaka of the growing and well-deserved fame of the bow skills of the princes of Ayodhya. King Janaka told the story of the great bow of Shiva.

“Once upon a time,” – it’s big story – “Daksha was performing a *yajña* and he purposefully avoided giving oblations to Lord Shiva, because Shiva was his son-in-law. Daksha’s daughter was Parvati, given in marriage to Lord Shiva. Daksha became very proud and thought, ‘After all he is only my son-in-law, who

does he think he is?' Lord Shiva felt neglected and unhappy. In fact he was furious. Uninvited, he showed up at the ritual and wrecked the whole thing with his great bow Dhanus. The bow was left with the *devas* and then given to the people in my family. We worship it to this day. You know, I have a daughter. She was a find, a great find for me. Years ago I was plowing our fields, and just as the earth was turned from the blade, a baby was there in the furrow. This was a glorious baby, and I have brought her up since that time."

There is one thing about Sita which is not in the Ramayana. When Sita was a girl, and she was playing with a ball, the ball wedged in a corner behind the great bow Dhanus. Sita walked over and lifted the bow and took the ball. Many kings have come and tried to lift Dhanus. She just lifted it, and King Janaka knew she was not an ordinary girl.

तदेतन्मुनिशार्दूल धनुः परमभास्वरम् ॥ १-६६-२५

रामलक्ष्मणयोश्चापि दर्शयिष्यामि सुव्रत । यद्यस्य धनुषो रामः कुर्यादारोपणं मुने ।

सुतामयोनिजां सीतां दद्यां दाशरथेरहम् ॥ १-६६-२६

tadetanmuniśārdūla dhanuḥ paramabhāsvaram || 1-66-25

rāmalakṣmaṇayoścāpi darśayiṣyāmi suvrata |

yadyasya dhanuṣo rāmaḥ kuryādāropanaṁ mune |

sutāmayonijāṁ sītāṁ dadyāṁ dāśaratheraham || 1-66-26

King Janaka continued, "I decided that whoever that girl married should be one who could handle that Dhanus. I made that *pratijñā*. Countless princes have come before and failed in the attempt." In another story it is said that even Ravana came and tried with his twenty hands to lift it. He got wrapped up in it, and it took one thousand fellows to free one of his ten heads which had gotten trapped beneath the bow. Janaka went on, "The husband of my Sita, desired by many, must measure up to the bow. Wars have been waged over this, and I will definitely show it you boys."

To be continued...