

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

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तेषां निग्रहणे शक्तः स्वयं च कुशिकात्मजः । तव पुत्रहितार्थाय त्वामुपेत्याभियाचते ॥ १-२१-२१

इति मुनिवचनात् प्रसन्नचित्तो रघुवृषभश्च मुमोद पार्थिवाग्र्यः ।

गमनमभिरुच राघवस्य प्रथितयशाः कुशिकात्मजाय बुध्या ॥ १-२१-२२

तथा वसिष्ठे ब्रुवति राजा दशरथः स्वयम् । प्रहृष्टवदनो राममाजुहाव सलक्ष्मणम् ॥ १-२२-१

teṣāṃ nigrahaṇe śaktaḥ svayaṃ ca kuśikātmajāḥ ।

tava putrahitārthāya tvāmupetyābhiyācate ॥ 1-21-21

iti munivacanāt prasannacitto raghuvṛṣabhaśca mumoda pārhivāgryaḥ ।

gamanamabhiruroca rāghavasya prathitayaśāḥ kuśikātmajāya budhyā ॥ 1-21-22

tathā vasiṣṭhe bruvati rājā daśarathaḥ svayam ।

pahrṣṭavadano rāmamājuhāva salakṣmaṇam ॥ 1-22-1

By these words of Vasishtha, the great King Dasharatha, reassured, freed from concerns and sadness and confusion, regained his demeanor and his brilliance. Gradually his mind became resigned to sending Rama along with Vishvamitra. The king, realizing that he was being blessed, cheerfully called for Rama and Lakshmana. Tenderly, with great affection, the king smelled the head of his dear son. He told the boys what he wanted them to do, and then he and the whole assembly and even the *devatās* praised them and wished them well. The boys were committed to the care of Vishvamitra and they left the palace with him.

कलापिनौ धनुष्पाणी शोभयानौ दिशो दश । विश्वामित्रं महात्मानं त्रिशीर्षविव पन्नगौ ॥ १-२२-७

अनुजग्मतुरक्षुद्रौ पितामहमिवाश्विनौ अनुयातौ श्रीया दीप्तौ शोभयन्तावनिन्दतौ ॥ १-२२-८

अविप्रहतमैक्ष्वाकः पप्रच्छ मुनिपुंगवम् । अहो वनमिदं दुर्गं झिल्लिकागणसंयुतम् ॥ १-२४-१३

भैरवैः श्वापदैः कीर्णं शकुनैर्दारुणारवैः । नानाप्रकारैः शकुनैर्वाश्यद्भिर्भैरवस्वनैः ॥ १-२४-१४

सिंहव्याघ्रवराहैश्च वारणैश्चापि शोभितम् । धवाश्वकर्णककुभैर्बिल्वतिन्दुकपाटलैः ॥ १-२४-१५

संकीर्णं बदरीभिश्च किं न्विदं दारुणं वनम् । तमुवाच महातेजा विश्वामित्रो महामुनिः ॥ १-२४-१६

kalāpinau dhanuṣpāṇī śobhayānau diśo daśa ।

viśvāmitraṃ mahātmānaṃ triśīrṣaviva pannagau ॥ 1-22-7

anujagmaturakṣudrau pitāmahamivāśvinau

anuyātau śrīyā dīptau śobhayantāvanindatau ॥ 1-22-8

aviprahata maikṣvākaḥ papraccha munipuṅgavam |
aho vanamidaṁ durgam jhillikāganasaṁyutam || 1-24-13
bhairavaiḥ śvāpadaiḥ kīrṇam śakunairdāruṅāravaiḥ |
nānāprakāraiḥ śakunairoṁśyadbhirbhairavasvanaiḥ || 1-24-14
simhavyāghravārāhaiśca vāraṇaiścāpi śobhitam |
dhavāśvakarṇakakubhairbilvatindukapāṭalaiḥ || 1-24-15
saṅkīrṇam badarībhiśca kiṁ nvidam dāruṇam vanam |
tamuṁvāca mahātejā viśvāmitro mahāmuniḥ || 1-24-16

In the company of Lakshmana and Vishvamisra, Rama began his first journey to the forest. After a march of twelve miles, the group was deep in the wilderness around Ayodhya. Rama, still a boy, had not been to such a place. They had crossed the river Sarayu which has its source in the waters of Manasarovar, created from the mind of Brahma, at the foot of Mount Kailasa. Rama asked Vishvamisra question after question and stood wide-eyed taking in the wonder of the place. “*Aho vanam idam*” just like they say it in Tamil, “What a forest is this.” Dense and dark, bugs and crickets filling it with sounds, like our frogs, not a human being anywhere, frightening wild animals lurking somewhere, birds with stark calls that themselves seem able to kill, the roar of lions and tigers, snorts and snuffles of wild boar, trumpeting wild elephants, all of them beautifying the deep woods. The trees and shrubs and creepers and vines of various kinds, tall and short, smooth-barks and wrinkled and thorny, berried or not, reached far above into the sky everywhere. A winding animal path through the thick undergrowth at their feet. Rama asked, “Oh, Vishvamisra, what is the name of this forest?”

Vishvamisra told the boys, “This, the Karakavana, was once a place of people. It was fertile and abundant. But it has become the haunt of the *rākṣasī* Tataka and her son Marica. These are the two that disturb me. She even disturbed the great *muni* Agastya when he was here. She may have been beautiful at that time, but she was still a *rākṣasī*. It was Agastya who cursed her because she had tormented the people by exploiting her beauty and enchanting music. He just said, ‘Hey, that’s enough, you have had it.’ Losing her face and all her beauty, she regained her original gruesome *rākṣasī* form.” With this story, Vishvamisra prepared Rama for what was to come - the killing of Tataka. A *tātakā* is a woman, and killing a woman was considered against *dharma*. A *kṣatriya* would kill neither a woman nor a person who runs away from the battlefield. Neither will he kill one who

surrenders or one who has lost his weapons. These he should not kill. Rama knew all such *sāstra*, and he would not be ready or willing to kill a woman.

In the forest, Rama, as ever, was practicing with his bow and arrow. His practice made some noise, noise that reached Tataka. She knew there were humans about and she rushed to see. Vishvamitra said to the boys, “Do you hear that violent storm? That is her coming. Tataka is coming. You must kill her. Do not have any compunction - kill her. She is a female, but as a *rājā* you have certain duties. You must keep the people’s and the *sādhus’* welfare in view and base your judgment of right and wrong upon the highest good. Anyone who tampers with the welfare of the people must be punished. Tataka cannot be destroyed by anyone else; you alone are capable of this deed.”

Rama had previously been blessed with two powerful *mantras* from Vishvamitra - *bala* and *atibala*. Rama had been chanting those *mantras*, and now the *mantras* would serve him. Those blessed with these *mantras* cannot become tired, they cannot suffer hunger or fever, they cannot be killed. Thus Rama was armed and morally prepared to face the *rākṣasī*. Vishvamitra had laid the groundwork for what had to be done.

Nevertheless, Rama was not fully ready for it. Rama was doubtful, “How can I kill this woman, *rākṣasī* or not? There will be those who say that I have killed a woman. Lakshmana, I have decided just to cut off her nose and hands and send her back, not kill her. With that she cannot do any harm.” Even as she came, great *māyāvī* that she was, there was a fierce wind that brought a blinding dust storm that blinded the boys for some time.

नृशंसमनृशंसं वा प्रजारक्षणाकारणात् । पातकं वा सदोषं वा कर्तव्यं रक्षता सदा ॥ १-२५-१८

राज्यभारनियुक्तानामेष धर्मः सनातनः । अधर्म्यां जहि काकुत्स्थधर्मो ह्यस्यां न विद्यते ॥ १-२५-१९

nṛśaṁsamanaṛśaṁsaṁ vā prajāraṁśaṅakāraṇāt ।

pātakaṁ vā sadoṣaṁ vā kartavyaṁ rakṣatā sadā ॥ 1-25-18

rājyabhāranīyuktānāmeṣa dharmāḥ sanātanaḥ ।

adharmyāṁ jahi kākutsthadharmo hyasyāṁ na vidyate ॥ 1-25-19

“Didn’t I tell you?” said Vishvamitra. “She is not a woman, she is a *rākṣasī*. Wrong or not wrong, even if it is calamitous and full of *pāpa* in general, for the protection of the good people this job must be done. Those committed to rule a kingdom must know the ancient rule: When you are dealing with someone who

has no *dharma* you cannot follow any *dharma*. You have to dispose of her.” To send his point home, Vishvamitra told Rama of the times when Indra and other luminaries had to slay those in the form of women who were indeed *rākṣasīs*.

The unavoidable battle between Rama and Tataka began. Rama found himself caught in a rain of stones, boulders falling on and all around him. With his arrows and weapons and missiles he confidently stopped each and every one of the rocks as they fell from the sky. Again and again the hard rain started, and he quelled it every time. Then, near the end, as Tataka rushed at Rama and Lakshmana, Rama loosed an arrow which brought the demoness to the ground. It had been done: Tataka was slain. Above, far above, Indra and the gods nodded their heads and were pleased. They praised Rama and said, “Well done.” Having begun, Rama and Lakshmana and Vishvamitra proceeded to the *ṛṣi's āśrama*.

अथ तां रजनीमुष्य विश्वामित्रो महायशः । प्रहस्य राघवं वाक्यमुवाच मधुरस्वरम् ॥ १-२७-१
परितुष्टोऽस्मि भद्रं ते राजपुत्र महायशः । प्रीत्या परमया युक्तो ददाम्यस्त्राणि सर्वशः ॥ १-२७-२
देवासुरगणान् वापि सगन्धर्वोरगान् भुवि । यैरमित्रान् प्रसह्याजौ वशीकृत्य जयिष्यसि ॥ १-२७-३

atha tāṁ rajanīmuṣya viśvāmitro mahāyaśaḥ |
prahasya rāghavaṁ vākyaṁuvāca madhurasvaram || 1-27-1
parituṣṭo'smi bhadraṁ te rājaputra mahāyaśaḥ |
prītyā paramayā yukto dadāmyastrāṇi sarvaśaḥ || 1-27-2
devāsuragaṇān vāpi sagandharvoragān bhuvi |
yairamitrān prasahyājau vaśīkṛtya jayiṣyasi || 1-27-3

Peaking the boy's interest, Vishvamitra said to Rama, “O prince of great fame, use what I am going to give you to support your further accomplishment. I have for you these various arrows, each one an *āstra*.” A *śastra* is a weapon which remains in your hand when you fight, a sword *et cetera*. An *āstra* is something that you let loose from your hand; some of them come back like a boomerang, some of them get lost. All these *āstras* given by Vishvamitra are loaded by *mantra*. These *āstra* are mentioned in both Ramayana and Mahabharata. It seems as though they are very real; perhaps they had such things in those days. Each *āstra* has a *devatā*, a presiding deity. The warrior would invoke the deity with the *mantra*, whereby the *āstra* becomes as powerful as the very deity itself. Thus *brahmāstra* is the last word in weaponry. That was one of the ones that Rama was given by Vishvamitra, along with a number of other descriptively named and well-known arrows. Some

of them emit fire, like napalm bombs. Some of them shower water, *varuṇāstra*. If combatants shoot the fire arrow against the water arrow they neutralize each other. Warriors would do *tapas* and invoke the deities to gain the favor of use of the various *āstras*. But it was not just a matter of getting the *āstra*. It is not just the specific arrow, it is the *mantra* that turns any arrow into the potent *āstra*. A warrior must also have the presence of mind to employ the *mantra* in the heat of battle to gain its benefit.

In the Mahabharata, there is the story of Karna, a mighty fighter in Duryodhana's army. In fact there was no one the equal to Karna in archery. But Arjuna had an edge over Karna, because Karna was not able to get it together and remember the *mantras* that would empower his arrows. Of course this defect was due to a curse. At the right time to bow a special arrow, Karna's mind went blank. Nevertheless he was a great archer.

तानि दिव्यानि भद्रं ते ददाम्यस्त्राणि सर्वशः । दण्डचक्रं महद० दिव्यं तव दास्यामि राघव ॥ १-२७-४

धर्मचक्रं ततो वीर कालचक्रं तथैव च । विष्णुचक्रं तथात्युग्रमैन्द्रं चक्रं तथैव च ॥ १-२७-५

वज्रमस्त्रं नरश्रेष्ठ शैवं शूलवतं तथा । अस्त्रं ब्रह्मशिरश्चैव ऐषीकमपि राघव ॥ १-२७-६

ददामि ते महाबाहो ब्राह्ममस्त्रमनुत्तमम् । गदे द्वे चैव काकुत्स्थ मोदकी शिखरी शुभे ॥ १-२७-७

स्थितस्तु प्राङ्मुखो भूत्वा शुचिर्मुनिवरस्तदा । ददौ रामाय सुप्रीतो मंत्रग्राममनुत्तमम् ॥ १-२७-२२

सर्वसंग्रहणं येषां दैवतैरपि दुर्लभम् । तान्यस्त्राणि तदा विप्रो राघवाय न्यवेदयत् ॥ १-२७-२३

जपतस्तु मुनेस्तस्य विश्वामित्रस्य धीमतः । उपतस्थुर्महार्हाणि सर्वाण्यस्त्राणि राघवम् ॥ १-२७-२४

प्रतिगृह्य ततोऽस्त्राणि प्रहृष्टवदनः शुचिः । गच्छनेव च काकुत्स्थो विश्वामित्रमथाब्रवीत् ॥ १-२८-१

गृहीतास्त्रोऽस्मि भगवन् दुराधर्षः सुरैरपि । अस्त्राणां त्वहमिच्छामि संहारान् मुनिपुंगव ॥ १-२८-२

एवं ब्रुवति काकुत्स्थे विश्वामित्रो महातपाः । संहारान् व्याजहाराथ धृतिमान् सुव्रतः शुचिः ॥ १-२८-३

tāni divyāni bhadrāṃ te dadāmyastrāṇi sarvaśaḥ |

daṇḍacakraṃ mahad divyaṃ tava dāsyāmi rāghava || 1-27-4

dharmacakraṃ tato vīra kālacakraṃ tathaiiva ca |

viṣṇucakraṃ tathātyugramaindraṃ cakraṃ tathaiiva ca || 1-27-5

vajramasraṃ naraśreṣṭha śaivoṃ śūlavataṃ tathā |

astrāṃ brahmaśiraścaiva aiṣīkamapi rāghava || 1-27-6

dadāmi te mahābāho brāhmamastramanuttamam |

gade dve caiva kākutstha modakī śikharī śubhe || 1-27-7

sthitastu prāṇmukho bhūtvā śucirmunivarastadā |
 dadau rāmāya supṛīto mantragrāmamanuttamam || 1-27-22
 sarvasaṅgrahaṇaṁ yeṣāṁ daivatairapi durlabham |
 tānyastrāṇi tadā vipro rāghavāya nyavedayat || 1-27-23
 japatastu munestasya viśvāmitrasya dhīmataḥ |
 upatasthurmahārḥaṇi sarvāṅyastrāṇi rāghavam || 1-27-24
 pratigrhya tato 'strāṇi prahr̥ṣṭavadanaḥ śuciḥ |
 gacchaneva ca kākutstho viśvāmitramathābravīt || 1-28-1
 gr̥hītāstro 'smi bhagavan durādharṣaḥ surairapi |
 astrāṇāṁ tvahamicchāmi saṁhārān munipuṅgava || 1-28-2
 evaṁ bruvati kākutsthe viśvāmitro mahātapāḥ |
 saṁhārān vyājahārātha dhṛtimān suvrataḥ śuciḥ || 1-28-3

Vishvamitra gave Rama a quiver of divine arrows, each one named after its deity or its capacity. Weapons of great variety he gave: the missiles *hayashiras* and *krauncha* and *mohana* and *kinkinī*, and spinning discs and javelins and the sword *nandana* and maces *modaki* and *śikarī*. Rama gathered the weapons, and as he did this, the deities of those weapons came and prostrated to him and offered themselves. Rama told them to go to their homes and be prepared to come to his side when he called for them. Taking off again, Rama proceeded to ask Vishvamitra for the specific instructions and *mantras* that applied to the various *āstras*. Rama wanted to be certain that he could get the most out of each, and that, for the arrows with that capacity, he would get the weapon back after its use. With the permission of Vishvamitra, Rama shared everything with Lakshmana. Can you imagine how pleased the boys were with these valuable weapons?

They reached the delightful *siddhāśrama* of Vishvamitra where Rama, curious as he was, continued to ask the *ṛṣi* about all he saw. Vishvamitra told a story. There was a great King Mahabali who performed a ritual that would render him even more powerful. This Mahabali was an *asura*, a sort of a demon, but not a *rākṣasa*. Mahabali had already been a problem for good people, and now he would be even more of a problem. He would become unconquerable. The *devas* went to Lord Vishnu and prayed, "O Lord, please help us. Take care of this Mahabali before he completes this ritual." To deal with Mahabali, Vishnu came to earth as a very short, young man, a *vāmana*, a dwarf and a Brahman, a *tejasvin*, a Lilliput. Overnight, Vishnu in the form of this *vāmana* established the *siddhāśrama*. He wait-

ed there until the *yāga* was complete. As the *dakṣiṇā* was being given to the *brāhmaṇas* at the *yāga*, the Lord in the form of a dwarf fell in at the end of the line. Mahabali received the holy boy and asked him what he might have come for. At the end of the ritual was the time when Mahabali was obliged to cater to the needs of the *brāhmaṇas*, otherwise the results of the ritual would not come forth and bless Mahabali. Mahabali was happy that the youthful Brahman had come, and he offered him jewels and cows, whatever he wanted.

The *vāmana* said, “Hey, *rājendra*, I cannot use money or gold or cattle; none of this would help a small fellow like me. What can I get out of those things? What I want is to possess the *bhūmi*, the piece of land, that I can measure with three footsteps. Please give me only this much.”

Mahabali, looking at the legs of the little fellow, was amused. Smiling, the exalted one among the *asuras* agreed to fulfill the wish of this Brahman. Just then, Shukra, the *guru* of Mahabali, who was there at the sacrifice, warned, “Be not deceived, great king, this *vāmana* that is standing here is none other than Lord Vishnu, he who could never really decline to this level. You do not know why he has come; some trick is here. This one who is not well understood by Brahmaji, by Shiva, by Indra, by yogis, by *devas*, by *asuras*, is that Vishnu who is here. You may not want to do what he asks.”

Among the *rākṣasas* there was a certain value structure, like a code among criminals, their own codes and rules. The *rākṣasas* have some kind of *dharma* with them. Mahabali said, “If Lord Vishnu has come here to receive something from me at the conclusion of my successful ritual, I will definitely give. Just that I was able to bring him down here is a great thing. At this point, I am not going to worry about what is going to come later. Let this be. Let this be the very fulfillment of my *yajña*.” Having said this, Mahabali offered water to the Brahman and said, “Whatever it might be, it is yours, not mine.”

Even when you offer into the fire you say that, “*agni svāhā*,” unto Agni is this oblation, “*na mama*,” it is not mine. You make it very clear. Otherwise Agni may feel indebted to you. You make it very clear that you do not expect anything back. It is a like a legal language. You say both: it is yours and it is not mine. You say that with any money given to a pundit or a priest after a ritual. He will do all the chanting, and when it comes time he will ask you to say, “*na mama*.” Then it is clear. The giving is complete. The gift is over.

अथ विष्णुर्महातेजा आदियां समजायत । वामनं रूपमास्थाय वैरोचनिमुपागमत् १-२९-१९

त्रीन् पदानथ भिक्षित्वा प्रतिगृह्य च भोदिनीम् । आक्रम्य लोकांल्लोकार्थी सर्वलोकहिते रतः १-२९-२०

महेन्द्राय पुनः प्रादान्नियम्य बलिमोजसा । त्रैलोक्यं स महातेजाश्चक्रे शक्रवशं पुनः १-२९-२१

atha viṣṇurmahātejā ādiyāṁ samajāyata ।

vāmanāṁ rūpamāsthāya vairocanimupāgamat ॥ 1-29-19

trīn padānatha bhikṣitvā pratigrhya ca bhodinīm ।

ākramya lokāṁllokārthī sarvalokahite rataḥ ॥ 1-29-20

mahendrāya punaḥ prādānniyamya balimojasā ।

trailokyāṁ sa mahātejāścakre śakravaśaṁ punaḥ ॥ 1-29-21

The giving of water begins the giving. Mahabali offered water to the Brahman dwarf. Even as the water touched the hand of that *vāmana*, that *vāmana* assumed the cosmic form, *viśvarupā*. Lord Vishnu encompasses all, he is all. The cosmic form of the Lord covered the three worlds. Then he took the three steps. One step covered the earth, the second covered the heavens, the third step had no place at all. Having taken two steps, Lord Vishnu asked Mahabali, "Hey what are you going to do now? I still have another step to take."

Mahabali replied, "What can I do now? You have covered the whole; what more is there to give?"

The Lord said, "Still there is one place left that is yours."

"Mine?" said the *asura* king, "Where is that?"

Then Lord Vishnu said, "It is your head. That little island is the one place in creation that is yours. All the rest is mine." See behind the story. There is only one thing that is yours, this little island with a patch of hair or not on top. "That you can give me," said Lord Vishnu.

Mahabali considered everything and said, "All right." He bent down to the feet of the Lord. Receiving the touch of the feet of the Lord, Mahabali became a great *mahātmā*. Even today Mahabali is worshipped because of his submission of his *asura*, his *ahaṅkāra*. 'Sura' is one who is happy, one who is effulgent, knowledgeable, *na asura*. 'Bali' means offering, and that is the greatest *bali* anyone can give. Land, cows, gold, jewels - these are already the Lord's. There is only one thing that you can give, and Mahabali gave it. Mahabali gave up that, the *ahaṅkāra*, and became one with the Lord.

After telling the story, Vishvamitra said to Rama, “The very *āśrama*, *siddhāśrama*, that was established by the *vāmana* is where we are now. It is my *āśrama* and now you can take it as yours.”

Amidst the *śiṣyas* and sages of the *āśrama* who had gathered to greet the returning *guru*, Rama asked, “Well, what’s next?”

एवमुक्तो महातेजा विश्वामित्रो महानृषिः । प्रविवेश तदा दीक्षां नियतो नियतेन्द्रियः ॥ १-२९-३०

कुमाराविव तां रात्रिमुषित्वा सुसमाहितौ । प्रभातकाले चोत्थाय पूर्वां संध्यामुपास्य च ॥ १-२९-३१

प्रशुची परमं जाप्यं समाप्य नियमेन च । हुताग्निहोत्रमासीनं विश्वमित्रमवन्दताम् ॥ १-२९-३२

evamukto mahātejā viśvāmitro mahānṛṣiḥ |

pravivēśa tadā dīkṣāṁ niyato niyatendriyaḥ || 1-29-30

kumārāviva tāṁ rātrimuṣitvā susamāhitau |

prabhātakāle cotthāya pūrvāṁ sandhyāmupāsya ca || 1-29-31

praśucī paramaṁ jāpyaṁ samāpya niyamena ca |

hutāgnihotramāsīnaṁ viśvāmitramavandatām || 1-29-32

Vishvamitra said, “For six days I will take up this *dīkṣā*, you must be very alert, *rākṣasas* will come.” Having said this, Vishvamitra, *mahāmuni*, closing his eyes, went into the resolve, the *upāsanas* that he wanted to do. In the morning, according to *vidhi*, the princes bathed and prayed, worshipped certain *āstras* that required such, and prepared themselves. Day and night they were on guard without sleep.

अथ काले गते तस्मिन् षष्ठेऽहनि तथाऽऽगते । सौमित्रिमब्रवीदœ रामो यत्तो भव समाहितः ॥ १-३०-७

रामस्यैवं ब्रुवाणस्य त्वरितस्य युयुत्सया । प्रज्ज्वाल ततो वेदिः सोपाध्यायपुरोहिता ॥ १-३०-८

atha kāle gate tasmin ṣaṣṭhe'hani tathā''gate |

saumitrimabravīd rāmo yatto bhava samāhitaḥ || 1-30-7

rāmasyaivaṁ bruvāṇasya tvaritasya yuyutsayā |

prajajvāla tato vedīḥ sopādhyāyapurohitā || 1-30-8

Rama spoke to Lakshmana, “Be ever attentive. As ants or as antelopes, we do not know in which form they will come.” Vishvamitra’s nearby ritual fire glowed just as did Rama’s face.

To be continued...