

Ramayana – Part 2



In the last lesson, we narrated the Ramayan story till the birth of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrugna. Emperor Dasaratha was blessed with four handsome sons after successfully completing the putrakameshti yagna. The people of Ayodhya celebrated the momentous day. Festivities continued throughout the Kosala kingdom.

All the four princes grew up to be bright, strong, intelligent, and obedient. Rama charmed all the beings, not just humans, with his polite and virtuous behavior. Every being was filled with joy at the mere sight of Rama. Dasharatha was filled with pride at Rama's conduct and behavior. All the four young princes were sent to Vasistha Maharshi for schooling. Vasistha Maharshi was the Kulaguru (family teacher) of Raghava Dynasty. All the four brothers learnt the lessons taught at school exceedingly well. Under Vasistha's able guidance, all four became masters of the Vedas, great heroic warriors, and reservoirs of all good qualities. The skills acquired by the four princes were not utilized by them to hurt others, but to guard the world. They always strived to give all beings peace and happiness. All the virtuous qualities shined brightly in those four princes. The qualities will shine only when they are followed up with appropriate practice, regularly and consistently.

From childhood, Lakshman was very attached to Rama, and Rama was also attached to Lakshmana. In fact, Rama would not eat anything, or even go to sleep, without Lakshmana. Similarly, Bharata and Satrugna were very dear to one another and practically inseparable.

Viswamitra's visit to Ayodhya

The four princes completed their education with Vasistha Maharshi. Now, emperor Dasaratha was anxious to find suitable brides for his young princes. Dasaratha assembled the court of all his ministers, and Kulaguru for the purpose of finding suitable brides for the four young princes. While he was issuing instructions to his ministers to find suitable brides, suddenly great Viswamitra Maharshi entered into the palace. Dasaratha immediately rose from his throne and hurried towards the entrance to welcome the great Maharshi. All the dignitaries in the court also followed Dasaratha. Dasaratha was well aware that Viswamitra could create another universe with a mere thought. Viswamitra was a king who attained sainthood through terrible austerities. He had long ago exhibited his spiritual powers by starting to create another Brahma and rival universe. Aware of all this, Dasaratha received Viswamitra as Indra would welcome Lord Brahma and touching his feet, the King said, "O great saint, your coming here is a great blessing for me. I am honored by your presence. Now, please tell me what you desire, so that I may serve the purpose of your visit."

Viswamitra was very pleased with king's reception, and said "I am performing a great yagna for a certain purpose. Two Rakshasas (demons), Maricha and Subahu are creating hurdles in the completion of yagna. These two demons are kamarupi (capable of transforming themselves into any form or appearance). I have attempted to complete the yagna many times, but they have repeatedly polluted my yagna arena by dropping flesh and blood upon the altar. You may ask why I have not punished those two demons, myself, with my powers gained through penance. After become Brahmarsi, I have ceased cursing any being in the universe. Also, when that yagna is being performed, I am ordained to keep my anger in check and not curse anyone. Maharaja, I wish to take your sons Rama and Lakshmana so that He can kill these two Rakshasas, so that I may successfully complete my yagna.

Dasaratha trembled with fear and anxiety. He had a hard choice to make; either to give his beloved young sons to be killed by demons or himself incurs the terrible anger of Viswamitra for not fulfilling his word. He pleaded the sage not to press his demand, and said, "Rama is not yet fully sixteen years of age. How can he fight with Rakshasas? I am here, and my army is ready to march to protect you and your yagna. How can a lad protect you and your yagna? Please tell me more about these two Rakshasas."

Then Viswamitra described Maricha and Subahu, and Ravana their master. And he demanded again that Rama should be sent along with him. Also he assured Dasaratha that Rama can accomplish this task easily. When Dasaratha heard the name Ravana, he became even more fearful and exclaimed, "No one is able to fight with Ravana! I cannot fulfill your request. I cannot even bear to think of allowing my son to accompany you!" The King's pleas and reasons enraged Viswamitra, and his body shook with anger. Knowing Viswamitra's anger and its consequences, Vasistha Maharshi turned to the king and said, "Having once said, 'I will do', you have no choice but to do it. You will lose the merit of all your great gifts and deeds by failing your word. You promised to do whatever Viswamitra asked. You have to do it, no matter how difficult it is for you. Send Rama with the sage, and send Lakshmana too. When they are protected by Viswamitra, you need not to worry for their safety. No Rakshasa can hurt them. Formerly, when Viswamitra was a king, he received celestial weapons from Lord Shiva and other gods. Viswamitra will surely give these weapons to Rama, as well as the necessary training to kill the Rakshasas. He can kill those Rakshasas himself very easily, but he is asking your help just to enhance your son's glory."

Having heard the words of Vasistha, Dasaratha's fear subsided and his mind once again became balanced and pacified. The king then cheerfully agreed to send his son with Viswamitra. He called for Rama, and because the two were practically inseparable, Lakshman soon appeared with His elder brother. The King, the Queen-Mothers and Vasistha blessed them, and sent them with Viswamitra.

When they reached the banks of Sarayu River, Viswamitra taught mantras known as Bala and Atibala to Rama and Lakshmana. These mantras free one from the influence of fatigue and old age, and they give incomparable wisdom and strength. After receiving these mantras Lord Rama appeared to shine with the brilliance of a thousand suns.

Demon Tataka

They continued their travel, and entered into a dense, uninhabited forest near the southern bank of the Ganges River. After seeing the forest, Rama said, "This desolate forest inspires fear in the heart of whoever happens to see it. Please tell Me why, if you know the reason." Viswamitra replied, "This forest was Dandakaranya, and it was once a well-peopled and prosperous place. A wicked Rakshasa woman named Tataka came here and began to terrorize the citizens. Tataka is the wife of the Rakshasa, Sunda, and their son is Maricha, whom I have brought you here to kill. People gradually left this place due to greatly harassed by Tataka. Now it is completely deserted."

“My dear Rama, I want You to destroy this she-demon today, and thus free this country of its oppression. As long as this Rakshasi remains alive, no one dares to even enter this forest. Rama, Tataka is thoroughly wicked, and so cast aside all hesitation to kill a woman.”

Rama responded, “You are My guru, and so it is My duty to obey your orders. Also, our father’s behest is that we should obey you without question.” and then He drew back the string of His mighty bow. The twanging sound created when Rama let go of the bowstring reverberated throughout the four directions, terrifying all creatures. That awesome sound entered Tataka’s cave, and the Rakshasi became enraged upon hearing it. As Tataka madly soared through the air, rushing toward the spot from where that sound had come, Rama could see her approaching.

By use of her mystic powers, Tataka created a dust storm that temporarily clouded Rama and Lakshmana’s vision. Then, a shower of stones poured from the sky. Quickly regaining His composure, Rama smashed all the stones with His arrows, and then cut off Tataka’s arms. At Rama’s urging, Lakshmana cut off Tataka’s ears and the tip of her nose, but then, suddenly, she disappeared. While remaining invisible, Tataka continued to shower stones, and at this time, Viswamitra cautioned Rama against delay in dealing the death-blow to the monster. “She deserves no sympathy,” he said. “The sun is about to set and remember that at night demons grow stronger. Do not delay to slay her.”

Thus advised, Rama took an especially powerful arrow and released it at the onrushing she-demon (Rakshasi). That single blazing arrow pierced Tataka in the chest, making her scream with pain and then fall down dead onto the ground with a terrible crashing sound.

The Devas (gods) above cheered, and Viswamitra was filled with joy, embracing Rama and blessing him. With Tataka’s end, the forest was freed from the curse and became beautiful to see. The princes spent the night there with Viswamitra, and the next morning proceeded to Viswamitra’s ashram to protect his yagna.

Questions:

- Who was Rama’s family guru?
- Who was Viswamitra?
- Why was Dasaratha afraid to send Rama with Viswamitra?
- Why did Vasistha say Dasaratha had to send Rama with Viswamitra?
- Was Rama obedient to his father and guru?
- What are demons called?
- What is a she – demon called?
- Why might Rama hesitate to kill the she demon?
- Why did he kill her anyway?
- Why did Viswamitra tell her Rama to kill her before nightfall?
- Why didn’t Viswamitra kill the rakshasas himself?
- Why did Viswamitra want Rama to come with him? What was Rama to do for him?

Daily Slokas:

Ganesh Sloka

*Vakra Tunda Mahaa Kaaya; Suryakoti Samaprabha
Nirvighnam Kurume Deva; Sarvakaaryeshu Sarvadaa*

Saraswati Stotra

*Saraswathi Namasthubyam; Varade Kamaroopini
Vidyarambham Karishyami; Siddhir Bhavatume Sada*

Guru Stotra

*Gurur Brahmaa Gurur Vishnu; Gurur Devo Maheshwarah
Guruh Saakshaat Parabrahma; Tasmai Shree Gurave Namah*

Vishun Stotra:

*Shuklambharadharam Vishnum Shashivarnam Chaturbhujam
Prasanna Vadanm Dhyayet Sarva Vignopa Shantaye*

Rama Mantra:

*Sri Rama Rama Rameti, Rame Rame Manorame
Sahasranama tattulyam, Rama Nama Varanane*

Durga Stotra:

*Om Sarva Mangala Maangalye Shive Sarvaartha Saadhike
Sharanye Triyambake Gauri, Naaraayani Namostute*

Hanuman Mantra:

*Manojavam Maarutatulyavegam; Jitendriyam Buddhimataam Varistham
Vaataatmajam Vaanarayoothamukhyam; Sriramadootam Sirasa Namami*

Matru Devo Bhava Sloka:

*Maathru Devo Bhava; Pitru Devo Bhava
Acharya Devo Bhava; Athidhi Devo Bhava*

Morning Prayers:

*Karaagre Vasate Lakshmi; Kara Madhye Saraswathi
Kara Moole Tu Govinda; Prabahate Kara Darshanam*

*Gange cha Yamune chaiva Godavari Saraswati,
Narmade Sindhu Kaveri jalesmin sannidhim kuru*

CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

- 2 How many children Dasaratha had?
- 4 Tataka's son
- 6 The river bank where Rama was taught mantras
- 7 Lakshmana is very close to
- 9 One of the mantras Viswamitra taught Rama
- 11 One can transform into another form
- 14 What is Viswamitra?
- 15 The forest Tataka lives
- 16 Rama's kingdom
- 17 Dasaratha's family Guru

DOWN

- 1 Other name to demon
- 3 Demon Maricha's master
- 5 The Rakshasa woman
- 8 Who asked Dasaratha to send Rama with him?
- 10 Who accompanied with Rama to kill demons?
- 12 Bharata's father
- 13 Viswamitra wants Rama to complete a

Coloring Exercise

