

Ramayan – Part 3



As you recall from the last lesson, Maharshi Viswamitra took the young Rama and his brother Lakshmana to get rid of the demons bothering his yagna. There was one huge demon named Tataka who was tormenting everyone in the area. Rama dispatched Tataka as they traveled to Viswamitra's ashram. Viswamitra was pleased, and taught Rama the use of all divine weapons, called astras, which Rama then taught to Lakshmana. Later in the day, they arrived at Viswamitra's hermitage, called Siddhashram.

Rama kills Subahu and protects Viswamitra's Yagna

Viswamitra told Rama that the place was formerly the residence of Lord Vishnu in His incarnation as Vamana, and narrated the whole story of Vamana Avatar. Viswamitra also added: "This is where at first Narayana and later Kashyapa performed tapas, resulting in the incarnation of God as Vamana. In this holy place I live now. The Rakshasas (demons) come and obstruct our worship and our austerities. Your coming here is to end this evil."

Rama told Viswamitra that he might begin the preparations for his yagna immediately. Viswamitra began to prepare for the continuation of his yagna, while Rama and Lakshmana guarded the arena with bows in hand. Five days and nights passed without any incident in this way. Rama and Lakshmana did not even sleep during the yagna. Then, on the critical sixth day, flames shot up from the sacrificial fire, indicating the imminent arrival of the Rakshasas. After a moment, a fearful clamor was heard in the sky as Maricha and Subahu, along with their followers, swooped down without warning. By use of their mystic powers, the Rakshasa were about to cause torrents of blood, flesh, and other contaminated substances to rain down upon the sacrificial altar. Rama said, "Lakshmana, we will disperse Maricha with my weapons, but I will not kill him, because he is destined to live for some more years." After saying this, Rama released a mighty arrow that struck Maricha in the chest and flung him up a full hundred yojanas near the sea without killing him. Then, taking another arrow, Rama pierced Subahu in the chest, making him fall down dead onto the ground. By invoking a third divine arrow, Rama dispersed all the remaining Rakshasas, so that the area once again became calm. All the rishis residing at Siddhashram came and congratulated Lord Rama, and that evening, the yagna came to a successful conclusion.

Viswamitra was extremely happy at the successful completion of his yagna. He and other rishis showered Rama and Lakshmana with blessings. After passing the night, Rama approached Viswamitra and other rishis, and inquired, "O brahmanas, now that your ashram has been freed of all disturbances, is there anything more that we can do to be of service?" At Viswamitra's urgings, the rishis assembled there said to Rama, "We are about to depart for the kingdom of Mithila, so that we can take part in a grand sacrifice that is being arranged by Maharaja Janaka. We would like you both to accompany us. There is a wonderful bow that had formerly belonged to Lord Shiva being kept at the sacrificial arena. The prince of

Ayodhya should see that marvelous bow.” Rama happily agreed to accompany Viswamitra and the rishis.

Sita, Lord Shiva’s Bow, and Rama Wins Sita’s Hand

Viswamitra, along with Rama and Lakshmana reached the sacrificial arena of Maharaja Janaka after a long travel from his Ashram. As soon as Maharaja Janaka heard of Viswamitra’s arrival, he hurriedly came to greet him. After seating Viswamitra amongst the foremost of sages, Janaka noticed the two boys, and requested for their identity. Janaka felt that they are gods, appearing in human form. Viswamitra replied, “These two young men are the sons of Maharaja Dasharatha, and Their names are Rama and Lakshmana. I brought them from Ayodhya to my ashram to kill the Rakshasa who were disturbing my yagnas. Now, they have come here to see the wonderful bow that you have been worshipping with such care and devotion.”

Maharaja Janaka then explained, “Long ago, Lord Shiva used this bow to disrupt the Dakshayagna. Being denied his rightful share of the offerings, Lord Shiva had picked up this bow and threatened to annihilate the demigods. Coming to their senses, the demigods were able to pacify Lord Shiva, who in turn gave them his bow. Later on, the demigods entrusted the bow to Devavrata, my forefather.” The bow is very heavy. It takes 500 strong men to even lift it up and move it, even an inch.

Maharaja Janaka next talked about his daughter: “One day as I was preparing the sacrificial ground by leveling it with a golden plough, much to my surprise, the plough hit a box. There was a beautiful girl inside the box. As we were childless, we accepted the infant as the goddess Earth’s gift to us. We named her Sita. Sita is an extraordinary person, and I have decided she can only marry someone else who is so special.

Janaka told them one story to illustrate how wonderful Sita was. One day while Sita was playing with a ball with other young girls, it rolled under Siva’s bow. Remember how heavy the bow is? Sita picked it up and moved it aside, just with her little finger. Therefore, I have proclaimed that my daughter will be given in marriage to the prince who can lift, bend and string Siva’s bow. Sita is not any ordinary girl, born from the womb of goddess Earth, only a man of great valor deserved to have her. Many princes, who had heard of Sita’s beauty, came to Mithila only to return disappointed. No one could pick up the bow, and so what to speak of string it or even bend it.”

“Because Rama is very eager to see the bow of Lord Shiva, I will have it brought here for Him to examine. If Rama is able to string it, then I will gladly give Him my beautiful daughter, Sita, in marriage.” Maharaja Janaka gave the order, and soon, five hundred strong men were seen pulling the immense bow, which was encased in a chest and mounted upon a vehicle having

eight wheels. When it came before them, Viswamitra asked Rama to open the chest, while thousands of people gathered around out of curiosity.

Rama placed His left hand upon the middle of the bow, and, as everyone looked on, he effortlessly lifted it out of its case. Then, to the great astonishment of everyone, Rama strung the bow in an instant and continued bending it with great force. Suddenly, there was a thunderous cracking sound, as the bow snapped in the middle. Actually, the breaking of the bow sounded like a mountain bursting apart, and it stunned the senses of all the people assembled there, making them fall to the ground, with the exception of Viswamitra, Janaka, Rama, and Lakshmana. Janaka proclaimed: "My beloved daughter shall be wedded to this prince." Immediately Janaka sent his swift messengers to Ayodhya to give the news to king Dasaratha, and to invite him.

Questions:

- What is a Maharaja?
- How much did Rama and Lakshmana sleep while protecting Viswamitra's yagna?
- What were the names of the weapons that Viswamitra taught to Rama?
- What was the name of Janaka's adopted daughter?
- Where did he find her?
- Who's daughter was she really?
- How heavy was Shiva's bow?
- Who was able to move the bow by themselves?
- What type of contest did Janaka set up to win Sita in marriage?
- Who broke the bow?

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*

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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Coloring Exercise

