

Ramayan – Part 5



As you recall from the last lesson, Maharaja Dasaratha announced Sri Rama as the crown prince. People of Ayodhya started decorating streets and their homes to celebrate this joyous occasion as everyone loves Rama as dearly as they loved life itself. The entire city began to buzz with excitement in anticipation of the coronation ceremony.

Kaikeyi was the king's youngest and favorite wife. At the time of King Dasaratha and Kaikeyi's wedding, Kaikeyi's father had given her daughter a hunch-backed maidservant named Manthara to look after her interests. The evening before Rama's planned crowning ceremony, Manthara had gone onto the roof of the palace, and saw the splendidly decorated city, crowded with people in a festive mood. Manthara surprised to see all this, and inquired for the reason. The moment she comes to know the news of Rama's coronation ceremony, it pierced Manthara's envious heart.

Immediately Manthara rushed to Kaikeyi's palace, and told her the news. At first Kaikeyi was overjoyed. "That is wonderful!" she said. Manthara almost choked listening to her. "Wonderful, you say?" Don't you realize that King Dasaratha promised your father when you married him that your son (Bharata) would be king? Don't you find it odd that King Dasaratha sent Bharata out of town during the coronation? Don't you realize once Rama becomes king, you will be only a maid to Kausalya, and your son too will be degraded to the status of a servitor to Rama?" Kaikeyi didn't believe her at first. She expressed her full faith on Rama that he treats all his brothers as his very self. She did not see any difference whether Rama sits on the throne or Bharata. Also, she expressed that Rama always serves her more carefully than He does His own mother.

When Manthara reiterated again and again the calamities that will occur to Kaikeyi and Bharata once Rama becomes king, gradually Kaikeyi's heart became poisoned by Manthara's hateful words. She began to believe that all that Manthara said was true and the king had indeed plotted to deprive her son of his lawful position. Her enviousness of Kausalya aroused, and her face flushed with anger. Kaikeyi at last declared, "Manthara, you are right! What shall I do?"

Now Manthara smiled. This is the way wicked people work. When they bring people in on their conspiracy, they feel happy. Manthara said to Kaikeyi, "Do you remember that you accompanied King Dasaratha to one of the battles he fought for Lord Indra? You saved his life steering his chariot away when he was almost killed in that battle? When King regained consciousness, he was so grateful, and gave you two boons and you kept the offer pending for later". "Yes" said the queen. "Get King Dasaratha to give you these two boons. One was that Bharata should be installed as king, and the second was that Rama should be banished for fourteen years to the forest, which would give enough time for Bharata to consolidate his position in the country", said Manthara.

What a cruel plan this was. But Kaikeyi had been completely convinced by her maid that she would suffer badly if she didn't do these things. Plus, it was part of the Divine Plan that Rama should go to the forest. So in their own way, Kaikeyi and Manthara were doing well.

Manthara and Kaikeyi devised a devious way to get the King to do what they wanted. Kaikeyi went to what was called the “sulking chamber”. This is where queens went when they were unhappy. King Dasaratha went to see Kaikeyi in her palace and found her there, lying on the floor, sobbing, her clothes and hair all in a mess. Dasaratha loved Kaikeyi dearly. He could not imagine why she was so unhappy. He had a huge heart of love for her. He promised to give her anything she wanted to make her happy. She made him swear again and again that he would give her what she wanted. Then she demanded the two boons he owed her. Again, he said he would give her anything. Then she sprang the trap! She wanted Bharata on the throne and Rama exiled to forest!

The King fainted when he heard what she wanted. His love for his wife now tasted like poison. He would rather die than not make Rama King. But also, in his whole life, he had never told untruth. The path of dharma, of righteousness, demanded that he honor his word and give Queen Kaikeyi her boons. But this was too much. Either he acted against Rama, or he dishonored his word. Either path would cause him untold anguish. What could he do? He pleaded with Kaikeyi to request other boons, but like a cruel serpent squeezing its victim, she demanded that he keep his word to her.

The night had passed and the auspicious day on which the installation was to take place had dawned. Sage Vasishta entered the city with his disciples and requested the minister Sumantra to apprise the king of his arrival. Sumantra was astonished to see the king on the floor and Kaikeyi sitting in a disheveled state beside him. She ordered him to go and get Rama. Sumantra left immediately and brought Rama to the king's chamber. Entering the royal palace, Rama bowed before the dejected king and before Kaikeyi. He was surprised to see his father, who was usually so happy to see him, sitting with eyes cast down. "Have I caused you any unhappiness, Oh father? In what way have I displeased you"? He asked.

The king could not speak or even raise his eyes to look at him and Kaikeyi said, "The king is neither angry nor displeased with you. He is unhappy because he does not wish to keep the promise he gave me long ago. It is your duty as an obedient and loving son to see that your father does not break his word". Rama was astonished to hear this and said, "How can my father doubt that I would not obey his commands! I would jump into the fire if he so ordered me". Kaikeyi now spoke again, "Well know this, Oh scion of the Raghus, the two boons I have asked for are these - that my son Bharata should be installed as Emperor in your place and that you should go on exile to the forest for fourteen years! Your father cannot bear to carry out these wishes of mine and that is why he has such a sorrowful look and refuses to look at you."

There was no reaction from Rama after hearing that. No anger or hatred. Rama was not upset at all because of his superhuman personality. Rama always treated Kaikeyi, if possible, with even more respect than to His own mother. "Mother, why do you trouble the King with this? If it is your wish for me to go to the forest and Bharata crowned King, I am happy to go. Your and the King's wish is automatically my wish. Let me say goodbye to my Mother and Sita, and I will be on my way this very day." King Dasaratha sobbed tears of regret at having to send his beloved son away.

Thus saying, Rama circumambulated his father and Kaikeyi thrice and backed out of the room. Rama did not care whether he was crowned King or whether he went to the forest. He was just happy to follow his father's orders. His brother Lakshmana, however, was very upset. When Rama told his mother Kausalya the news, she fainted and fell to the floor. Everyone in Ayodhya, with perhaps the exception the maid Manthara and Queen Kaikeyi, considered Rama the very light of their life. He was their joy, he was the sun they woke up to in the morning and went to bed with at night. He was their all and everything. When rumors flashed through the city of what had happened, the festive atmosphere died and distress filled the city. People began to curse Dasaratha and Queen Kaikeyi.

Rama went to see Sita in her palace, and told her the news. "Please take care of my mothers while I am gone" he asked. "There is no life for me without you" Sita told Rama. "I must also accompany you to the forest." Rama argued against this. "The forest is a very dangerous place" he said. "There are many wild animals and demons. I will not be able to protect you properly", he continued. But Sita would have none of it. It was also determined that Lakshmana would accompany Rama in his fourteen year exile. Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita took off their jewels and garments. They put on clothes made of light tree bark, which was what the ascetics in the forest wore. Then they proceeded away from the city into the forest.

Questions:

- Who was Bharata's Mother?
- Who was Manthara?
- Why did Bharata's mother want Rama exiled?
- Were Bharata's Mother's fears right?
- Do you sometimes have fears that are wrong?
- What is a boon?
- What boons did Bharata's Mother ask for?
- Was the King happy about giving these boons?
- Why did he give the boons?
- Was Rama unhappy about not becoming King and having to go the forest? Why or why not?
- Would you be unhappy in his situation?
- Was Rama a good son? Why?

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 Sloka:

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

Bath Sloka:

*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

