

Ramayana – Part 6



Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana proceeded on foot through the streets of Ayodhya, to the palace of Maharaja Dasaratha to take leave of him. As the three of them walked through the streets, without a chariot and attendants, the people who lined the streets were very pained to see this. Addressing each another, the citizens exclaimed, "What a great misfortune! Look at princess Sita, whose face has never been seen by any one, walking like an ordinary woman. How could the king banish a son like this, whose character has been acclaimed by all! We will take our families and accompany Rama, and let Kaikeyi and her son rule over a deserted land. Let Ayodhya turn into a forest while we convert the forest into a city, with Rama."

Though he heard the laments of the citizens, Rama was unperturbed and continued his journey to Kaikeyi's palace to see his father. When Rama entered Kaikeyi's palace, Maharaja Dasaratha quickly got up and ran to embrace Him. Rama asked his father for permission to leave to the forest with Sita and Lakshmana. Maharaja Dasaratha then urged, "Rama, Because of the pledge I had made to Kaikeyi, I have been forced to act in this senseless fashion. I request you to imprison me at once and ascend the throne yourself, this minute." Rama smiled and said, "I have no desire for sovereignty. I will proceed to the forest and redeem your pledge. I have promised Kaikeyi that I shall leave this very day and I must keep my word. Do not give way to grief, my Lord. Let the land be given to Bharata. I bear him no ill-will. Do not grieve on my account. I shall live in the forest as happily as I lived in the city."

Then Dasaratha told his minister to bring the costliest jewels from the treasury and personally decked his daughter-in-law in all finery. He then ordered Sumantra to fetch the chariot and take Rama to the forest. All the ladies started to wail. Kausalya clasped her daughter-in-law to her bosom and gave her words of advice. Rama requested his father to take special care of his mother Kausalya, for he feared she would not be able to bear the parting. The three of them circled their father thrice and then turned to their respective mothers.

Requested by Sumantra, the three of them entered the golden chariot in which were kept the weapons of the two brothers as well as the glorious jewels which had been bestowed on Sita by her loving father-in-law. As the chariot started to move, the citizens clung to its sides, praising Rama and begging Him to turn back. Rama told them, "I cannot break My vow, and you should give Bharata the love that you have for Me." Rama told the charioteer to move faster. Looking back, he was most distressed to see that even the aged king and his mother were following the chariot, along the dusty road.

In the meantime, all the citizens who were able to follow had run after Rama's chariot determined not to be left behind. Rama tried his best to persuade them to return but they refused, so the three of them alighted from the chariot and walked with them, until they reached the banks of the Tamasa River. All of them spent the night there. A bed of leaves was made for Rama and Sita to sleep while Lakshmana and Sumantra kept awake. Waking up well before dawn, Rama observed that the tired citizens were still fast asleep. He feared that they would keep urging him to return. So he called Sita and Lakshmana and requested Sumantra to drive them to the forest before they woke up. In the morning, the citizens were heart-broken to find Rama gone and lamenting their lot sadly traced their way back to Ayodhya.

Wherever Rama went, while proceeding through various territories, villages, and forests, people felt very sad for Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana. The chariot quickly crossed the boundary of Kosala and arrived at the banks of the Ganga, and they stopped under a large tree. The king of this territory was Guha. When Guha heard of Rama's arrival, he jubilantly came to greet Him. The tribal chief did all he could to host the royal three. That night was spent on the banks of the sacred river. At dawn, Rama woke up and requested Guha to take them across the river. He asked Sumantra to return to Ayodhya for he preferred to proceed on foot. Sumantra pleaded with Rama for permission to accompany Him. "Sumantra, it is your duty to return and give what comfort you can to my aged parents. Please do not worry about us," said Rama. Reluctantly, with tears streaming from his eyes, the noble Sumantra returned to Ayodhya.

In the meantime, Guha arranged a beautiful boat and soon the three of them were rowed across the sacred river Ganga. From there the three of them proceeded on foot, much to Sita's delight. The next day they reached the hermitage of sage Bharadwaja, picturesquely situated at the holy spot, prayaga, confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Having spent the night at that delightful hermitage, they proceeded the next day to the sacred hill of Chitrakoota, as directed by the sage. Rama was very conscious of the duty he owed to Sita, who was prepared to brave the dangers of the forest in order to be with him and he tenderly helped her over the rough patches and kept up her spirits. She, on the other hand, was filled with delight at seeing all the wonderful plants and flowers of the forest and kept exclaiming with delight at everything, pointing out many new things to Rama and asking him about them.

When, at last, they arrived at the vicinity of Chitrakoota, they were very pleased to find an abundance of fruits, roots, sweet water, and honey. There they found Saint Valmiki's ashram. Sita, Rama, and Lakshman were very warmly received by the rishi, for he had been expecting their arrival for some time.

During the course of their conversation, Valmiki invited Rama to reside at that spot. At Rama's request, Lakshmana brought the necessary materials and within a short time, He built a nice little house, having walls made of wooden stakes and a thatched roof. After performing customary housewarming rituals, they entered into their new cottage.

Meanwhile, after Rama's departure, Guha dispatched some spies to follow Him unnoticed. When news came back that Rama had reached Chitrakoota, then only Sumantra mounted his chariot and began the painful journey back to Ayodhya. Sumantra went to Maharaja, and explained how he had returned after leaving Rama at the banks of the Ganga. While listening, Maharaja Dasaratha felt terribly distressed, and fainted. King regained his senses after sometime. Maharaja Dasaratha continued to lament in separation from Rama, while remembering Him with a fully absorbed mind. Then, when half of the night had passed, the King gave up his mortal body. The whole kingdom of Ayodhya was doomed in sorrow after hearing this added bad news.

In the meantime, the messengers sent by Vasistha brought back the two princes, Bharata and Satrugna. As they entered the city of Ayodhya, they were surprised to see the gloomy looks of the citizens. They went first to the king's apartments and not finding him there, Bharata went to

his mother's abode. Kaikeyi was rejoiced to see her handsome son. When questioned by him about the sorrowful looks of the citizens and the absence of his father, she told him the entire story and waited for his look of joy at the thought of becoming the king. Bharata could not believe his ears. He was amazed to see how little his mother knew him. "Surely my eldest brother, Rama should be king and not me", he exclaimed. He was furious with her!

As soon as he learned what had happened, Bharata took the army and marched after Rama, right to Chitrakoota Hill. Lakshmana thought Bharata had come to finish Rama off so as to secure his position as Emperor. Rama would hear none of this nonsense. He knew Bharata loved him completely.

When Bharata reached Rama in the forest, he fell at his feet, and tears fell copiously from his eyes. He begged Rama to return to Ayodhya and rule the Kingdom. Rama explained that relationships come and go, but that dharma (virtue) was eternal. He had to obey his father's command.

Everyone wanted Rama to return and rule Ayodhya. Even Kaikeyi, the queen who had him banished, said she realized her error and wanted him to return. Rama showed her and all the others only love. A respected Brahmin Guru named Jabali tried convincing Rama to return. He explained that his father was dead, and therefore what his father wished was no longer important. The guru made many such logical arguments as to why Rama should give up his exile. Rama respectfully disagreed.

Then Bharata tried a different method of persuasion. He told Rama that he would fast (not eat a morsel) until Rama agreed to return. Rama replied that he had never done anything to Bharata to deserve such ill treatment. Trying a new argument, Bharata suggested that he himself go into exile in Rama's place, so that Rama could return and rule Ayodhya.

None of these arguments swayed Rama in the least. He knew the difference between right and wrong, and he was not going to let personal sentiment get in the way of doing the right thing. He gave everyone his blessings and sent them back to Ayodhya. After the fourteen year term of his exile was over, he promised he would return to Ayodhya and become Emperor. Bharata said that if he was even one day late, he would walk into the sacred yagna fire and kill himself. Also, Bharata took Rama's padukas (sandals) so he could worship them in Rama's absence. This was the devotion Bharata had for Rama.

Questions:

- Did the people of Ayodhya want Rama to leave?
- Did his father want him to leave? Why did he have to leave?
- Who was the King's charioteer? What was his name?
- Did Bharata want to be Emperor?
- Name the Hill where Rama took up residence? Did Sita like the forest, or was she afraid?
- Rama said that relationships come and go but _____ is eternal. What did he mean?
- Was Bharata devoted to Rama? 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 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

