

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

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अहं राघव कैकेय्या वरदानेन मोहितः । अयोध्यायां त्वमेवाद्य भव राजा निगृह्य माम् ॥ २-३४-२६

aham rāghava kaikeyyā varadānena mohitaḥ ।

ayodhyāyām tvamevādya bhava rājā nigṛhya mām ॥ 2-34-26

Rama entered Dasharatha's palace and the assembly. At the first sight of his dearest son, King Dasharatha swooned and fainted, falling to the floor. Others began to wail and cry. Gathering himself, Dasharatha rose and spoke, "I have made a mistake. I did not know what I was doing. Rama, take me as a captive. I have been cheated by my own promise. Unwittingly I gave my word. How could I know that this was a burning fire covered and hidden by ashes? I was innocent, deluded. I did not know that a snake was hidden there. It is my mistake, I must live with it, but you, my son, do not have to follow it. Take me captive and take the throne right now. Take the crown here and now."

In India, when there was Mohammedan rule, there was always a problem that the father would be thrown into prison and the son ascend violently to the throne. That is the history of Muslim rule in India. Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal, was tossed into prison when Aurangzeb decided he should rule. Then the son met the same fate at the hands of his son. Somehow, that is their custom. The story and values of the Ramayana are ingrained in the fibers and the thinking of the people of India. It is impossible for them to think, however cruel the father is, of the son overthrowing the father. The father would not be cruel to the son anyway. It is all part of the culture. What is possible in one culture is found nowhere in the other. The influence of the story, being shared everywhere from childhood, is very much a part of India.

एवमुक्तो नृपतिना रामो धर्मभृतां वरः । प्रत्युवाचाञ्जलिं कृत्वा पितरं वाक्यकोविदः ॥ २-३४-२७

भवान् वर्षसहस्राय पृथिव्या नृपते पतिः । अहं त्वरण्ये वत्स्यामि न मे राज्यस्य कङ्क्षता ॥ २-३४-२८

नव पञ्च च वर्षाणि वनवासे विहृत्य ते । पुनः पादौ ग्रहीष्यामि प्रतिज्ञान्ते नराधिप ॥ २-३४-२९

evamukto nrpatinā rāmo dharmabhṛtām varaḥ ।

pratyuvācāñjalim kṛtvā pitaram vākyakovidah || 2-34-27

bhavān varṣasahasrāya pṛthivyā nṛpate patiḥ |

aham tvarānye vatsyāmi na me rājyasya kaṅkṣitā || 2-34-28

nava pañca ca varṣāṇi vanavāse vihr̥tya te |

punaḥ pādau grahīṣyāmi pratijñānte narādhipa || 2-34-29

Hearing his father's choked words, Rama, the one who knows how to talk, spoke, "You must be the emperor for another thousand years. There is no way I can take you as a captive. You are my lord and king. I will gladly dwell in the forest these fourteen years. I have no desire at all to rule at this time. Do not think you are hurting me by sending me this way. There is not the slightest injury or resentment on my part. When the vow is fulfilled, I will come back and again I will hold your feet."

श्रेयसे वृद्धये तात पुनरागमनाय च । गच्छस्वारिष्टमव्यग्रः पन्थानमकुतोभयम् ॥ २-३४-३१

न हि सत्यात्मनस्तात धर्माभिमनसस्तव । संनिवर्तयितुं बुद्धिः शक्यते रघुनन्दन ॥ २-३४-३२

अद्य त्विदानीं रजनीं पुत्र मा गच्छ सर्वथा । एकाहं दर्शनापि साधु तावच्चराम्यहम् ॥ २-३४-३३

śreyase vṛddhaye tāta punarāgamanāya ca |

gacchasvāriṣṭamavyagraḥ panthānamakutobhayaṃ || 2-34-31

na hi satyātmanastāta dharmābhimanastava |

sannivartayitum buddhiḥ śakyate raghunandana || 2-34-32

adya tvīdānīm rajanīm putra mā gaccha sarvathā |

ekāhaṃ darśanenāpi sādhu tāvaccharāmyaham || 2-34-33

Weeping, Dasharatha, giving the approval that Rama sought, said, "Please go, and please safely come back. But won't you wait one day and night before you go. That way I will be able to spend some time with you? This will allow Kausalya and others to be comforted. There was a well-designed scheme that took advantage of me, causing my own wishes to work against me. For you to take them upon yourself is a great sacrifice. Your commitment to *dharma* is total and fully evident. I am happy and proud, yet at the same time I cannot stand your departure. When, three times, I promised to do whatever this woman wanted, I was trapped. For you to have to do this to fulfill those words is my mistake and my regret. It is a wonder in *dharma* that you willingly make this choice."

न चैतन्मे प्रियं पुत्र शपे सत्येन राघव । छन्नया चलितस्त्वस्मि स्त्रिया भस्माग्निकल्पया ॥ २-३४-३६
वञ्चना या तु लब्धा मे तां त्वं निस्तर्तुमिच्छसि । अनया वृत्तसादिन्या कैकेय्याभिप्रचोदितः ॥ २-३४-३७
फलानि मूलानि च भक्षयन् वने गिरींश्च पश्यन् सरितः सरांसि च ।

वनं प्रविश्यैव विचित्रपादपं सुखी भविष्यामि तवास्तु निर्वृतिः ॥ २-३४-५९

na caitanme priyaṃ putra śape satyena rāghava ।

channayā calitastvasmi striyā bhasmāgnikalpayā ॥ 2-34-36

vañcanā yā tu labdhā me tāṃ tvaṃ nistartumicchasi ।

anayā vṛttasādinyā kaikeyyābhipracoditaḥ ॥ 2-34-37

phalāni mūlāni ca bhakṣayan vane girīṃśca paśyan saritaḥ sarāṃsi ca ।

vanam pravishyaiva vicitrapādapani sukhī bhaviṣyāmi tavāstu nirvṛtiḥ ॥ 2-34-59

Rama knew what he must do. He had given his word to Kaikeyi that he would go. He had to go now to make both his words and his father's words true. He asked his father to let him go and to go on this very day. "The moment I gain the forest I will be happy. There will be fruit and roots in abundance. The beauty of the mountains and trees and rives will unfold before me. You think perhaps that I will miss the kingdom, but I will get everything there."

यस्यास्तव पतिस्त्यक्तो राजा दशरथः स्वयम् । भर्ता सर्वस्य जगतः स्थावरस्य चरस्य च ॥ २-३५-५

नह्यकार्यतमं किञ्चित् तव देवीह विद्यते । पतिघ्नीं त्वामहं मन्ये कुलघ्नीमपि चान्ततः ॥ २-३५-६

यन्महेन्द्रमिवाजय्यं दुष्प्रकम्प्यमिवाचलम् । महोदधिमिवाक्षोभ्यं संतापयसि कर्मभिः ॥ २-३५-७

yasyāstava patistyakto rājā daśarathaḥ svayam ।

bhartā sarvoasya jagataḥ sthāvarasya carasya ca ॥ 2-35-5

nahyakāryatamaṃ kiñcit tava devīha vidyate ।

patighnīm tvāmahaṃ manye kulaghñīmapi cāntataḥ ॥ 2-35-6

yanmahendramivājayyaṃ duṣprakampyamivācalam ।

mahodadhimivākṣobhyaṃ santāpayasi karmabhiḥ ॥ 2-35-7

Sumantra, who was there in the assembly, had been stuffing his anger the whole time. Finally he let go and vented his wrath at Kaikeyi, "Kaikeyi, oh, what you have done. Just look, you have destroyed everything. You want your son to have a kingdom and this has cost Dasharatha's peace and his joy. A husband should be like a god to his wife. How do you think you are going to make a decent life after doing this? Have you not destroyed both your husband and your family? Your achievement is nothing. This great king, the great tree of *dharma*, In-

dra-like in his objectivity and unswayed by other's emotions, is now helpless, felled by your action. Unshakable as a mountain, fullness like the ocean, our king lies here now, made miserable by your whims. Still there is the opportunity now to change this curse and right what you have wronged. Ask Rama not to go, withdraw your boon, perhaps the wondrous prince will listen. You choose to finish off the abundant mango tree that yields the sweet fruits we all thrive on. The tree you nourish is the neem tree, margosa, of which every part is bitter. Except for its shade it is a useless tree. Were you to pour gallons of fresh milk at the foot of your sour tree, it would not produce one single sweet fruit. You think that Bharata is going to be happy? I tell you, Bharata, who has been well brought up, is no less a person than Rama. When he comes here and finds out what this is all about, he is not going to accept this kingdom.

"I have heard a proverb: The son takes after the father; the girl takes after the mother. This I have heard, but I never believed it at all. There are always exceptions, and this is no rule. I never had any great faith in this. But now it looks to me as though there may be some truth in it. You see, Kaikeyi, I know your mother. Your father had been given a boon by a great saint. Your father had the capacity to talk with all the beasts and creatures of earth. Once, when your father and mother were together, your father suddenly laughed. She demanded, 'Why are you laughing? Are you laughing at me or are you just crazy.'

Your father replied, 'No, no, I am laughing at something else. I heard some of the creatures talking and it was funny and I laughed.' 'You did? You heard them? What did they say?' 'Well, I cannot tell you that,' he said honestly. 'Why can't you tell me?' He said, 'You know, according to the sage who granted me this ability, if I share what I have heard from these animals I will die. I am not supposed to tell the secrets.' 'I don't care about that, tell me.' That, Kaikeyi, was your mother. Therefore I see that it is true after all that the daughter takes after the mother." Sumantra, a man of wisdom and sweet words, was angry and wanted to strike and to make Kaikeyi think a little bit. But Kaikeyi did not budge.

To be continued...