

**Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa**  
**As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati**

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तत्र राजा गुहो नाम रामस्यात्मसमः सखा । निषादजात्यो बलवान् स्थपतिश्चेति विश्रुतः ॥ २-५०-३३

*tatra rājā guho nāma rāmasyātmasamaḥ sakhā ।  
niṣādajātyo balavān sthapatīśceti viśrutaḥ ॥ 2-50-33*

Rama and Sita and Lakshmana rode away from their home. Reaching the banks of the Ganges, they met Guha, the leader of the hunters who lived there. Guha and Rama had long known each other and they were great friends. Guha had heard that Rama might come his way. He and his ministers and followers met Rama's chariot and offered their friendship and food. Rama declined food, saying he had bathed in the Ganga and would fast, but he agreed to stay through the night. When Lakshmana told Guha of recent events, Guha offered himself and his realm to Rama. But the prince, saying that it was still too close to Ayodhya, said that the three would move on. Minister and charioteer Sumantra, who had come this far with Rama, was sent back, despite his objections, to Ayodhya. Rama instructed Sumantra to continue to care for Dasharatha as only he knew how, "Tell my father to care for my mother, my dear Kausalya, and tell him that I will be back. Tell Kausalya that things are going well and the forest is pleasant and generous."

Lakshmana spoke up, "Tell Dasharatha that it's all his fault we are here in the forest because of his infatuation to a woman. The forest, thorny and bumpy, is not all that pleasant, and eating roots *et cetera* is not like the palace food."

Sita was silent, her eyes were filled with tears, she could not say anything. For her the forest was an adventure and a challenge, a lot of hiking and no hitch-hiking. She was there with Rama, but she had been brought up as Janaka's princess. Being a gifted child she had been worshipped as a goddess, endeared to all by her conduct, beauty, and wisdom, the joy of all. Here she looked up at her beloved Rama, unable or unwilling to say anything about Kaikeyi or her situation, with tears in her eyes.

Sending him off, Rama said to Sumantra, "If you do not return now to the

palace, Kaikeyi may be suspicious of my father. She may think we are hiding somewhere nearby where we are setting up a new palace against her wishes. My father's words are truthful and should not be doubted by anyone. Go back and convince her that her will is being fulfilled. Tell my father that I honor him as my peerless king and as my dear father. Tell him I worship him and I will again come and hold his feet."

Sumantra headed back to Ayodhya with an empty chariot. As he came to the gates of the city people everywhere strained to see if by chance or by some god's will Rama and Sita were there in the chariot. The white horses and the streaming banners they knew, but there was no sign of their hero and their hope. The chariot was empty and their prayers went unanswered. Sumantra told the king what each of the three had said. He told Kausalya that Rama had asked her to hold steadfast to her daily prayers, for that was all she had to hold on to. He told them all that Rama was sure that he would return.

After crossing river Ganga by boat and offering prayers to the great water, Rama and his fellow travelers walked on from Guha's forest and headed for the Dandaka forest. On the way he came upon sage Bharadvaja's ashram. The great *ṛṣi* told the prince that he had heard of the current events and that he had hoped Rama would come his way. Bharadvaja shared all he had with his visitors and asked Rama to stay on with him. But Rama said it was still too near to Ayodhya and that people would come to know that he was there. He asked Bharadvaja of a good direction to take and a good destination. Bharadvaja told Rama of the place called Citrakuta, sixty miles distant. The trio made their way across the holy Yamuna river and on toward Citrakuta.

The scene shifts back to Ayodhya where Dasharatha's sadness and anger, stirred by Sumantra's report from Rama, caused the king to rave like a madman. Dasharatha insisted he could not stand to be reminded of what had come to pass by living in his part of the palace. He moved to Kausalya's wing, where she could not contain herself and would chide Dasharatha about his attachment to the evil queen Kaikeyi and the weakness that brought on this tragedy. All the results of her own being neglected came forth in Kausalya's treatment of her husband. Kausalya was just doing her best to deal with the absence of Rama and the

knowledge that he and Sita had been placed into a dangerous situation. She could not accept that, and, being a mother-in-law, she could not dispel her thoughts of what King Janaka would think of how his princess was being treated. He had given his divine daughter to a prince, not a to a forest dweller. Taunted and reminded of his questionable decision, Dasharatha felt again wounded and irreparably hurt. With salt thrown on his wounds, he wailed to Kausalya that she was destroying him. With that, Kausalya realized that she was putting pressure on Dasharatha that he could not handle. She fell at her husband's feet and asked his forgiveness and his understanding that she was acting only out of her grief.

Dasharatha calmed a bit and reflected and told Kausalya this story. "Once, as a prince, I went to the forest to hunt. Now, after all these years, the whole picture comes to me and it becomes clear. There, while hunting, I heard the sound of a hidden elephant drinking water." Dasharatha was one who could send an arrow with devastating effect toward a target that he could not see. He had been practicing that skill. "I sent an arrow toward that elephant that I had heard. A cry rang out, and it was a human cry. I hurried to that place where I found a young boy who had been sent to gather water in a pot. The sound the water made in the pot I heard as an elephant. Who would expect a human to be in that part of the forest? I made this grave mistake and pierced this sweet boy, the son of an ascetic. I bent over the boy, but if I had pulled the arrow from his body it might have immediately taken his life. You know there is no greater fault than to take the life of a Brahman. But the boy looked up at me and said, 'No, I am not a Brahman, I am the son of an elderly couple. I came here to fetch water for them. Please go tell them what has happened.' Hoping to save the boy, I gently extracted the arrow, but it was too late, and the boy fell silent and breathed his last."

Dasharatha went on, "I went to the boy's parents, ascetics, great people, and *tapasvins*. These gentle forest dwellers said, 'King Dasharatha, it was not your intention, but you have destroyed us. He was our only son, and there is no way we can live without him. He cared for us tenderly and gave us love and hope. No, you did not know it was a boy that was there; perhaps you could not have known. Now, please take us to see our son.'" The three went, and you can read the words of sincere lamentation and grief here in the verses.

Dasharatha told Kausalya the rest of the story, “The father of the boy said to me, ‘Remember one thing. If what you have done were deliberate, if it were not done in innocence, your head would have already split open because this boy was born of an ascetic. You cannot slay a person like that without losing your head, I need not tell you. Your innocence has saved you, but as a king, beware of any action like this. I am not cursing you, but it will catch you up in time. Something will come that will complete the lesson that you are to learn from this. Near the end of your life, it will be you who laments the loss of a son. You will know our suffering. I do not wish this upon you, but this will happen in your life.’

“O Kausalya, now I remember this well. Blessed with four sons and their worthy wives, now I am bereft of them and their joyful presence. This is the word of the parents of that boy, and now I am here with that and more.” Night fell and sleep came to Dasharatha and Kausalya and Sumitra in their sadness and sorrow.

It is the tradition that the people come to the king’s palace chanting *veda* in the morning, accompanied by musicians singing and the sound of the vina and the flute. With that joyous and peaceful greeting, an auspicious cow, symbol of all fullness, is brought as the first thing the king sees. On this day, coming to wake the king, the people found Dasharatha out, unresponsive to the usual greeting. They touched Dasharatha’s hand - it was cold. They touched his heart, there was no pulse. Alarmed, they gasped, “Oh, the king,” and ran out. The two queens awoke and found what the others already had come to know. The king was dead.

तैलद्रोण्यां तदऽऽमात्याः संवेश्य जगतीपतिम् । राज्ञः सर्वाण्यथादिष्टाश्चक्रुः कर्माण्यनन्तरम् ॥ २-६६-१४

*tailadroṇyāṃ tada''mātyāḥ saṃveśya jagatīpatim |*

*rājñāḥ sarvāṅyathādiṣṭāścakruḥ karmāṅyanantaram || 2-66-14*

Kausalya was distraught. Her lord, her husband and king, had left her. The only reason for her to go on had been taken from her. She was beside herself with grief. She made up her mind to follow her husband into death, to place herself in the funeral pyre of her dear Dasharatha. She saw no reason to live. In the story, this part of the chapter is all about the lamentation. The mighty king lay there like a silent mountain. The ministers were concerned that there was no son present who could perform the necessary cremation rituals. This is a great disruption of the Hindu tradition. The ministers agreed to preserve the body until one of the

sons arrived. They had a tank dug in the turf, and they filled it with treated oils. To prevent further decay the body was placed there. A great assembly of the *mahārṣis* and sages and priests and wise men was called. The kingdom should never be without a king, it is like a body without a soul, action must be taken. In England they say, "The king is dead, long live the king." The death of Dasharatha was officially announced.

नाराजके जनपदे बीजमुष्टिः प्रकीर्यते । नाराजके पितुः पुत्रो भार्या वा वतते वशे ॥ २-६७-१०

अराजके धनं नास्ति नास्ति भार्याप्यराजके । इदमत्याहितं चान्यत् कुतः सत्यमराजके ॥ २-६७-११

नाराजके जनपदे चरत्येकचरो वशी । भावयन्नात्मनाऽऽत्मानं यत्र सायंगृहो मुनिः ॥ २-६७-२३

पुरोहितस्त्वां कुशलं प्राह सर्वे च मन्त्रिणः । त्वरमाणश्च निर्याहि कृत्यमात्ययिकम् त्वया ॥ २-६८-७

मा चास्मै प्रोषितं रामं मा चास्मै पितरं मृतम् । भवन्तः शंसिषुर्गत्वा राघवाणामितः क्षयम् ॥ २-६८-८

*nārājake janapade bijamuṣṭiḥ prakīryate |*

*nārājake pituḥ putro bhāryā vā vartate vaśe || 2-67-10*

*arājake dhanam nāsti nāsti bhāryāpyarājake |*

*idamatyāhitam cānyat kutaḥ satyamarājake || 2-67-11*

*nārājake janapade caratyekacaro vaśī |*

*bhāvayannātmanā' 'tmānam yatra sāyaṅgrho munīḥ || 2-67-23*

*purohitastvām kuśalam prāha sarve ca mantriṇaḥ |*

*tvaramāṇaśca niryāhi kṛtyamātyayikam tvayā || 2-68-7*

*mā cāsmāi proṣitam rāmaṁ mā cāsmāi pitaraṁ mṛtam |*

*bhavantaḥ śamsiṣurgatvā rāghavānāmitaḥ kṣayam || 2-68-8*

Kingdom without a king there is no cultivation, no growth of wealth, no lawsuit settled, no justice, no woman safe, no peaceful gathering of the people, no seeker of knowledge, and no one to provide protection for *dharmīs*. Vasishtha said a king must be installed. Bharata and Shatrughna were not far away. They would send for him and have him hurry to Ayodhya. The messengers that were sent for Bharata were instructed not to tell him of the death of his father or of his brother having been banished. They took the best horses and were off to the kingdom of Bharata's grandfather. On the very day of his father's death, Bharata awoke uneasy and still tired. He told his family that he was upset because he had a bad dream.

*To be continued...*