

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

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नैव सा क्षुभ्यते देवी न च स्म परिदूयते । न चास्या मुखवर्णस्य लक्ष्यते विक्रिया तदा ॥ २-३५-३७

naiva sā kṣubhyate devī na ca sma paridūyate ।

na cāsyā mukhavarnasya lakṣyate vikriyā tadā ॥ 2-35-37

In Kaikeyi's face one could see no change. Sumantra's words did not register, and she sat stern and smug in her determination and her will. She was neither shaken nor stirred nor swayed. She was committed to her own desire. It was really a wonder, and Sumantra gave up. Dasharatha collected himself and began to order the preparations of those who should accompany Rama to the forest. Of course the army with horsemen and chariots and warriors and elephants should go, and singers and entertainers, and grapplers, because Rama enjoyed watching good wrestling, and all the servants, all should go. Dasharatha thought, "I have banished Rama, but I will make the forest into an Ayodhya. I never told Kaikeyi, but I will just send the whole city along with Rama. As king I can command this."

राज्यं गतधनं साधो पीतमण्डां सुरामिव । निरास्वाद्यतमं शून्यं भरतो नाभिपत्स्यते ॥ २-३६-१२

rājyaṁ gatadhanam sādho pītamaṇḍāṁ surāmiva ।

nirāsvādyatamaṁ śūnyaṁ bharato nābhipatsyate ॥ 2-36-12

When Kaikeyi realized her husband's intent she became afraid, her whole countenance changed and her lips and mouth were parched and pursed, "You cannot send all the wealth with Rama. Bharata will be bereft of these necessities, and he will not want to rule an empty kingdom. Bharata's kingdom must be one with all the wealth that is here now. This is what I asked; you cannot say I did not ask this. It would be like giving wine but taking the alcohol out of it. What good is it without the spiritous part? What wine is that; what a tasteless kingdom that would be." That is her thinking, and that is why Valmiki uses that sentence.

Dasharatha voiced his anger, "You have hurt me and you continue to hurt

me. You send your arrows forth and it is clear I am your target.”

Kaikeyi replied, “Was it not true that in your own *varṁśa*, your family, there was a King Sagara. His careless son Asamanjasa was banished to the forest by his father. He had in his hand but a spade and a basket, and he was sent to the forest like that. Sagara did it and you should do it the same way. Rama, with a trowel and a basket, should go and dig roots to pass his days in the forest.”

Reacting to that, a noble minister named Siddhartha spoke up, “Kaikeyi, what are you saying? What kind of example is this? You are comparing Asamanja to our Rama? What has Rama done that makes him like Asamanja? Tell me one complaint from anybody about Rama. I would like to hear that. You can ask anywhere in Ayodhya. Just look now at the sorrow and sadness you have inflicted on this city. Choose your examples more carefully if you want us to listen to you. Do not further your misdeeds. I too will accompany Rama.”

In fact, in my village when my mother wanted to scold us she would say, “Hey, *śuddha asamanja!* *Śuddha asamanja!*” You are a pure Asamanja. Asamanjasa was a Crown Prince. As a boy he was a stout and strong fellow. He would play with and bully other children around his palace. He would lift the smaller children and throw them into the river, into any water. Some children died, others were barely saved. The people were enraged and demanded the king do something. For what he had done, the boy Asamanjasa was banished to the forest.

अनुव्रजिष्याम्यहमद्य रामं राज्यं परित्यज्य सुखं धनं च ।

सर्वे च राज्ञा भारतेन च त्वं यथासुखं भुङ्क्ष्व चिराय राज्यम् ॥ २-३६-३३

anuvrajiṣyāmyahamadya rāmaṁ rājyaṁ parityajya sukhaṁ dhanam ca ।

sarve ca rājñā bharatena ca tvam yathāsukhaṁ bhukṣva cirāya rājyam ॥ 2-36-33

When Dasharatha heard Siddhartha’s words he joined in, “I will go as well. You can stay here, Kaikeyi. I am going with Rama. All my comforts I am giving up. Let your Bharata and you stay here. I am getting out.” The king does not even refer to Bharata as his son here.

Rama intervened, "I am leaving now. Prepare the bark that will serve as the clothes for the three of us."

अथ चीराणि कैकेयी स्वयमाहृत्य राघवम् । उवाच परिधत्स्वेति जनौघे निरपत्रपा ॥ २-३७-६

*atha cīrāṇi kaikeyī svayamāhṛtya rāghavam ।
uvāca paridhatsveti janaughe nirapatrapā ॥ 2-37-6*

Kaikeyi, in her connivance, already had the bark garments at the ready. Giving them to Rama and Lakshmana and Sita, she told them to put these simple clothes on. Sita did not know which arm or leg to put where. She put the bark on over her silken dress and it was not a good fit.

कथं नु चीरं बध्नन्ति मुनयो वनवासिनः । इति ह्यकुशला सीता सा मुमोह मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ २-३७-१२

*katham nu cīraṁ badhnanti munayo vanavāsinaḥ ।
iti hyakuśalā sītā sā mumoha muhurmuḥuḥ ॥ 2-37-12*

Sita asked Rama, "How do the people in the forest wear something like this? Where do you tie it?" She was not used to this, and it took Rama's help to get the bark properly arranged. Seeing the great Rama assist the girl brought tears to all those who loved this great warrior and his sweet wife who had never said a word against Dasharatha or against Kaikeyi. That was Sita, devoted to her husband, trusting and following him implicitly, a princess raised with all the best who never questioned this dress of bark. It brought tears to the eyes of the women in the assembly. Dasharatha, in his kindness, insisted that Sita's usual fine clothing and jewelry be returned and that she wear them rather than the bark dress.

अतिप्रवृत्ते दुर्मेघे कैकेयि कुलपांसनि । वञ्चयित्वा तु राजानं न प्रमाणेऽवतिष्ठसि ॥ २-३७-२२

न गन्तव्यं वनं देव्या सीतया शीलवर्जिते । अनुष्ठास्यति रामस्य सीता प्रकृतमासनम् ॥ २-३७-२३

आत्मा हि दाराः सर्वेषां दारसंग्रहवर्तिनाम् । आत्मेयमिति रामस्य पालयिष्यति मेदिनीम् ॥ २-३७-२४

अथ यास्यति वैदेही वनं रामेण संगता । वयमत्रानुयास्यामः पुरं चेदं गमिष्यति ॥ २-३७-२५

अन्तपालाश्च यास्यन्ति सदारो यत्र राघवः । सहोपजीव्यं राष्ट्रं च पुरं च सपरिच्छदम् ॥ २-३७-२६

भरतश्च सशत्रुघ्नश्चीरवासा वनेचरः । वने वसन्तं काकुत्स्थमनुवत्स्यति पूर्वजम् ॥ २-३७-२७

ततः शून्यां गतजनां वसुधां पादपैः सह । त्वमेका शाधि दुर्वृत्ता प्रजानामहिते स्थिता ॥ २-३७-२८

न हि तदœ भविता राष्ट्रं यत्र रामो न भूपतिः । तद वनं भविता राष्ट्रं यत्र रामो निवत्स्यति ॥ २-३७-२९

न ह्यदत्तां महीं पित्रा भरतः शास्तुमिच्छति । त्वयि वा पुत्रवद् वस्तुं यदि जातो महीपतेः ॥ २-३७-३०
यद्यपि त्वं क्षितितलादœ गगनं चोत्पतिष्यसि । पितृवंशचरित्रज्ञः सोऽन्यथा न करिष्यति ॥२-३७-३१
तत् त्वया पुत्रगार्धिन्या पुत्रस्य कृतमप्रियम् । लोके नहि स न विद्येत यो न राममनुव्रतः ॥ २-३७-३२
द्रक्ष्यस्यद्यैव कैकेयि पशुन्यालमृगद्विजान् । गच्छतः सह रामेण पादपांश्च तदुन्मुखान् ॥ २-३७-३३

atipravṛtte durmedhe kaikeyi kulapāṁsani |
vañcayitvā tu rājānaṁ na pramāṇe'vatiṣṭhasi || 2-37-22
na gantaavyaṁ vanaṁ devyā sītayā śīlavarjite |
anuṣṭhāsyati rāmasya sītā prakṛtamāsanam || 2-37-23
ātmā hi dārāḥ sarveṣāṁ dārasaṅgrahavartinām |
ātmeyamiti rāmasya pālayiṣyati medinīm || 2-37-24
atha yāsyati vaidehī vanaṁ rāmeṇa saṅgatā |
vayamatrānuyāsyāmaḥ puraṁ cedam gamiṣyati || 2-37-25
antapālāśca yāsyanti sadāro yatra rāghavaḥ |
sahopajīvyam rāṣṭraṁ ca puraṁ ca saparicchadam || 2-37-26
bharataśca saśatrughnaścīravāsā vanecaraḥ |
vane vasantaṁ kākutsthamanuvatsyati pūroajam || 2-37-27
tataḥ sūnyāṁ gatajanāṁ vasudhāṁ pādapaiḥ saha |
tvamekā śādhi durvṛttā prajānāmahite sthitā || 2-37-28
na hi tad bhavitā rāṣṭraṁ yatra rāmo na bhūpatiḥ |
tad vanaṁ bhavitā rāṣṭraṁ yatra rāmo nivatsyati || 2-37-29
na hyadattāṁ mahīm pitrā bharataḥ śāstumicchati |
tvayi vā putravat vastuṁ yadi jāto mahīpateḥ || 2-37-30
yadyapi tvam kṣititalād gaganam cotpatiṣyasi |
pitṛvaṁśacaritrajñāḥ so'nyathā na kariṣyati || 2-37-31
tat tvayā putragardhinyā putrasya kṛtamapriyam |
loke nahi sa na vidyeta yo na rāmamanuvrataḥ || 2-37-32
drakṣyasyadyaiva kaikeyi paśuvyālamṛgadvijān |
gacchataḥ saha rāmeṇa pādapāṁśca tadunmukhān || 2-37-33

Perhaps Vasishtha, a wise man who seldom got involved, spoke up in a way that I would never expect him to. “Whaa,” he said, “Kaikeyi, you have crossed your bounds. You have gone too far. Your thinking is all evil. You have deceived the king, and you demean one who has brought fame to the family. Insisting Sita wear this bark is too much. Sita should not go to the forest. She should

occupy the throne that was to be filled by Rama. A wife is one with her husband; this is true for all householders. As the other self of Rama, it is she who should rule this place. If you send Vaidehi to the forest, do you know what will happen? The forest will come to Ayodhya. The people of Ayodhya will all leave and the jungle will return to this place. You will see Bharata and Shatrughna banish themselves to the forest. They will take up this attire of the ascetics and live with Rama. Then, Kaikeyi, you alone will remain here, ruling an empty kingdom. I hope this will make you happy. There is no kingdom of which Rama would not be made king. Where Rama lives, that will be the kingdom. Bharata would never rule a kingdom which was not directly given to him by his father. As the son of Dasharatha, Bharata will never choose you as his ruler.” That is too much for Vasishtha to say. “You will destroy your son. There is no one in the world who does not love Rama, how can Bharata be an exception to that? Today, Kaikeyi, you will see that along with Rama and Sita all the beasts will walk, all the birds and snakes. Even the trees will try. No one will stay after your tricks.” But Kaikeyi did not care about Vasishtha’s words and did not change her mind.

सृष्टस्त्वं वनवासाय स्वनुरक्तः सुहृज्जने । रामे प्रमादं मा कार्षीः पुत्र भ्रातरि गच्छति ॥ २-४०-५
व्यसनी वा समृद्धो वा गतिरेष तवानघ । एष लोके सतां धर्मो यज्ज्येष्ठवशगो भवेत् ॥ २-४०-६
इदं हि वृत्तमुचितं कुलस्यास्य सनातनम् । दानं दीक्षा च यज्ञेषु तनुत्यागो मृधेषु हि ॥ २-४०-७
लक्ष्मणं त्वेवमुक्तवासौ संसिद्धं प्रियराघवम् । सुमित्रा गच्छ गच्छेति पुनः पुनरुवाच तम् ॥ २-४०-८
रामं दशरथं विद्धि माम् विद्धि जनकात्मजाम् । अयोध्यामटवीं विद्धि गच्च तात यथासुखम् ॥ २-४०-९

sr̥ṣṭastvaṁ vanavāsāya svanuraktaḥ suhr̥jjane |
rāme pramādaṁ mā kārṣīḥ putra bhrātari gacchati || 2-40-5
vyasanī vā samṛddho vā gatireṣa tavānagha |
eṣa loke satāṁ dharmo yajjyēṣṭhavaśago bhavet || 2-40-6
idaṁ hi vṛttamucitaṁ kulasyāsya sanātanam |
dānaṁ dīkṣā ca yajñeṣu tanutyāgo mṛdheṣu hi || 2-40-7
lakṣmaṇaṁ tvevamuktoāsau saṁsiddhaṁ priyarāghavam |
sumitrā gaccha gaccheti punaḥ punaruvāca tam || 2-40-8
rāmaṁ daśarathaṁ viddhi mām viddhi janakātmaṁ |
ayodhyāmaṭavīm viddhi gacca tāta yathāsukham || 2-40-9

Lakshmana's mother offered advice to her son. Sumitra said, "I know well your attachment to Rama. Never be indifferent to your brother at any time. In comfort or discomfort Rama is your one refuge. The *dharma*, the *sanātanadharmā*, is that of the wise. Serve your elder brother as you would your father. This is the tradition of our family. Be diligent in the performance of the sacred rituals and ever ready to assist when there is an occasion to serve and protect the people. Look upon your brother Rama as your father, and look upon Sita as me, your mother. Look upon your home in the forest as Ayodhya, there where your lord dwells. Go, and be happy."

Rama's chariot was readied, and the three boarded. According to the tradition, when one is banished his feet should not touch the ground of the city. This tradition was meant to prevent a revolution or coup. The banished are taken to the boundary and then left there. As Rama and Sita and Lakshmana went forth, many men of the city followed them on horseback or on foot or were carried. Their plan was to stop Rama and to convince him to come back. At the border, Rama stopped the chariot and looking back at Ayodhya saluted the city. At the river that bounded the city, it being late, they all stopped to rest and sleep. In the morning, rising early and rousing Lakshmana and Sita, Rama had the chariot brought around before any of the others woke. The three rode off quietly.

When the others woke they searched for the trio, but it was too late, and everyone returned to the city to tell what had happened. The men who had followed Rama went back to their wives and said they had not been able to retrieve their hero. Their wives all said, "Then why did you come back?" The people of the city were dejected. As a result they talked of leaving the city and Kaikeyi *en masse* and going somewhere where they would not be reminded of their loss.

To be continued...