

The Avanti PRE Curriculum

Resource Sheet 7.6.2c

Story: "Rama Requested to go into Exile"

Kaikeyi stood firm and refused to yield. Dasharatha fainted and lay on the floor the rest of the night. The next morning, Sumantra, the minister, came to inform Dasharatha that all the preparations for the coronation were ready. But Dasharatha was not in a position to speak to anyone. Kaikeyi asked Sumantra to call Rama immediately. When Rama arrived, Dasharatha was sobbing uncontrollably and could only utter "Rama! Rama!"

Rama was alarmed and looked at Kaikeyi with surprise, "Did I do anything wrong, mother? I have never seen my father like this before."

"He has something unpleasant to tell you, Rama," replied Kaikeyi. "Long ago your father had offered me two boons. Now I demand it." Then Kaikeyi told Rama about the boons.

"Is that all mother?" asked Rama with a smile. "Please take it that your boons are granted. Call for Bharata. I shall start for the forest today."

Rama did his pranams to his revered father, Dasharatha, and to his stepmother, Kaikeyi, and then left the room. Dasharatha was in shock. He painfully asked his attendants to move him to Kaushalya's apartment. He was waiting for death to ease his pain.

The news of Rama's exile spread like a fire. Lakshmana was furious with his father's decision. Rama simply replied, "Is it worthwhile to sacrifice your principle for the sake of this small kingdom?"

Tears sprang from Lakshmana's eyes and he said in a low voice, "If you must go to the forest, take me along with you." Rama agreed.

Then Rama proceeded to Sita and asked her to stay behind. "Look after my mother, Kausalya, in my absence."

Sita begged, "Have pity on me. A wife's position is always beside her husband. Don't leave me behind. I'll die without you." At last Rama permitted Sita to follow him.

Urmila, Lakshmana's wife, also wanted to go with Lakshmana to the forest. But Lakshmana explained to her the life that he plans to lead for the protection of Rama and Sita.

"If you accompany me, Urmila," Lakshmana said, "I may not be able to fulfil my duties. Please take care of our grieved family members." So Urmila stayed behind on Lakshmana's request.

By that evening Rama, Sita and Lakshmana left Ayodhya on a chariot driven by Sumatra. They were dressed like mendicants (Rishis). The people of Ayodhya ran behind the chariot crying loudly for Rama. By nightfall they all reached the bank of the river, Tamasa. Early the next morning Rama awoke and told Sumantra, "The people of Ayodhya love us very much but we have to be on our own. We must lead the life of a hermit, as I promised. Let us continue our journey before they wake up."

So, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, driven by Sumantra, continued their journey alone. After travelling the entire day they reached the bank of the Ganges and decided to spend the night under a tree near a village of hunters. The chieftain, Guha, came and offered them all the comforts of his house. But

Rama replied, "Thank you Guha, I appreciate your offer as a good friend but by accepting your hospitality I will break my promise. Please allow us to sleep here as the hermits do."

Next morning the three, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, said goodbye to Sumantra and Guha and got into a boat to cross the river, Ganges. Rama addressed Sumantra, "Return to Ayodhya and console my father."

By the time Sumantra reached Ayodhya Dasharatha was dead, crying until his last breath, "Rama, Rama, Rama!" Vashishta sent a messenger to Bharata asking him to return to Ayodhya without disclosing the details.

Bharata' Return

Bharata immediately returned with Shatrughna. As he entered the city of Ayodhya, he realized that something was terribly wrong. The city was strangely silent. He went straight to his mother, Kaikeyi. She looked pale. Bharat impatiently asked, "Where is father?" He was stunned by the news. Slowly he learned about Rama's exile for fourteen years and Dasharatha's demise with the departure of Rama.

Bharata could not believe that his mother was the cause of the disaster. Kaikeyi tried to make Bharata understand that she did it all for him. But Bharata turned away from her with disgust and said, "Don't you know how much I love Rama? This kingdom is worth nothing in his absence. I am ashamed to call you my mother. You are heartless. You killed my father and banished my beloved brother. I will not have anything to do with you for as long as I live." Then Bharata left for Kaushalya's apartment. Kaikeyi realized the mistake she made.

Kaushalya received Bharata with love and affection. Addressing Bharata she said, "Bharata, the kingdom is waiting for you. No one will oppose you for ascending the throne. Now that your father is gone, I would also like to go to the forest and live with Rama."

Bharata could not contain himself any further. He burst into tears and promised Kaushalya to bring Rama back to Ayodhya as quickly as possible. He understood the throne rightfully belonged to Rama. After completing the funeral rites for Dasharatha, Bharata started for Chitrakut where Rama was staying. Bharata halted the army at a respectful distance and walked alone to meet Rama. Seeing Rama, Bharata fell at his feet begging forgiveness for all the wrong doings.

When Rama asked, "How is father?" Bharat began to cry and broke the sad news; "Our father has left for heaven. At the time of his death, he constantly took your name and never recovered from the shock of your departure." Rama collapsed. When he came to senses he went to river, Mandakini, to offer prayers for his departed father.

The next day, Bharata asked Rama to return to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom. But Rama firmly replied, "I cannot possibly disobey my father. You rule the kingdom and I shall carry out my pledge. I will come back home only after fourteen years."

When Bharata realized Rama's firmness in fulfilling his promises, he begged Rama to give him his sandals. Bharata told Rama the sandals will represent Rama and he would carry out the duties of the kingdom only as Rama's representative. Rama gracefully agreed. Bharata carried the sandals to Ayodhya with great reverence. After reaching the capital, he placed the sandals on the throne and ruled the kingdom in Rama's name. He left the palace and lived like a hermit, as Rama did, counting the days of Rama's return.