Parashurama Challenges Rama to String Vishnu’s Bow

Summary

The visitant [visitor] Parashurama narrates the legends of bows of Vishnu and Shiva to Rama. Un-heedful of the request of Dasharatha to spare his sons, Parashurama addresses Dasharatha Rama directly and asks him to take an aim with the longbow of Vishnu, and if Dasharatha Rama is capable to do so, Parashurama says that he will give a duel [a combat between two persons] to him.

Chapter [Sarga] 75 – in Detail

raama daasharathe viira viiryam te shruuyate adbhutam |

   dhanuso bhedanam caiva nikhilena mayaa shrutam || 1-75-1

Oh, valiant Rama of Dasharatha, your valor [personal bravery] is bruited [reported] as a sensational valor, and sensational is your smashing of Shiva's bow; also thus I have thoroughly heard about your others deeds like elimination of Tataka and others... [1-75-1]
tat adbhutam acintyam ca bhedanam dhanusah tathaa |

That way, smashing of that particular bow of Shiva is wondrous [extraordinary] and even unimaginable... on hearing that alone I happened upon you, bringing another outranking bow... [1-75-2]

tat idam ghora sa.mkaasham jaamadagnyam mahat dhanuh |

This alone is that catastrophic bow received through Sage Jamadagni... flex it with an arrow on bowstring stretching up to your ear, and in that way show your capability... [1-75-3]

tat aham te balam dristvaa dhanuso api asya puurane |

dvandva yuddham pradaasaamvi viirya shlaaghyam aham tava || 1-75-4

Thereby, on examining your strength in your taking aim with this bow, and should you be deservedly valorous, I will give you a combative duel... So said Parashurama to Dasharatha Rama. [1-75-4]

tasya tat vacanam shrutvaa raajaa dasharathah tadaa |

On hearing that sentence of Bhaargava Rama, then king Dasharatha became a pitiable [expressing grief] one, and with a downcast face and adjoined palms said this. [1-75-5]

visanna vadano diinah praanjali vaakyam abraviit || 1-75-5

Aren't you a Brahman with inviolable [secure from violation] asceticism, and whose rancor [bitter deep-seated ill will] on Kshatriya-s has calmed down long back. Why this hostility again. It'll be apt [ready or likely] of you to award aegis [protection] to my sons, for they are yet youngsters... [1-75-6]
Aren't you from the bloodline of Bhaargava-s who always conduct themselves in self-study of Vedas and self-principled ways... haven't you readily discarded weapon-wielding on your promise to Thousand-eyed Indra... [1-75-7]

Such as you were, you on becoming a dedicatee [one who is dedicated] to probity [adherence to the highest principles and ideals] haven't you given the planet earth to Kashyapa and haven't you repaired to forests, and haven't you flagged yourself on Mt. Mahendra... [1-75-8]

Or, oh, insurmountable [incapable of being overcome] sage, have you chanced upon us for a total annihilation [to cease to exist] of ours... when Rama is singularized [to make single] and eliminated, nay-said [not said] that we all will be living... Thus Dasharatha had gone on appealing in his love for his sons. [1-75-9]

While Dasharatha is speaking in that way that intransigent [uncompromising] Bhaargava Rama of Sage Jamadagni uncaring for those merciful words of Dasharatha addressed Rama of Dasharatha alone. [1-75-10]
ime dve dhanusii shresthe divye loka abhipuujite |
dridhe balavatii mukhye sukrite vishvakarmanaa || 1-75-11

These are the two strong and sturdy unsurpassed longbows, well-designed by Gods and well-crafted by Vishvakarma, the Divine Architect, and these are very important among all bows and well-worshipped by all worlds... one that you have broken in Janaka’s place, and the other in my hand... [1-75-11]

anisristam suraih ekam tryambakaaya yuyutsave |
tripura ghnam narashrestha bhagnam kaakutstha yat tvayaa || 1-75-12

Oh, best one among men, out of the two longbows, Gods gave one to restive Trymbaka (God Shiva), for a combat with demon Tripura, and oh, Kakutstha, that bow alone is the annihilator of Tripura, the demon... and you have broken that alone... [1-75-12]

idam dvitiyam durdharsam visnor dattam surottamaih |
tat idam vaisnavam raama dhanuh para puram jayam || 1-75-13

samaana saaram kaakutstha raudrena dhanusaa tu idam |

This is the second one and the choicest Gods gave this to Vishnu, thereby this is named after Him as 'Vishnu's bow...' this is an indestructible and enemy-citadel [a fortress that commands a city] conquering longbow... and this is identical in its efficacy [the power to produce an effect] with Rudra's longbow... [1-75-13, 14a]
Once, all the Gods were asking the Grandparent, Brahma, as to who is powerful and who is less powerful among the blue-throated Shiva and Vishnu... but the Grandparent Brahma on inferring [guessing] the intent of Gods started to create adversity [hostile or unfriendly] among those two, Shiva and Vishnu, for the Grandparent is the best adherer of truthfulness, as truth cannot be demonstrated on hearsay evidence... [1-75-14b, 15, 16a]

Owing to their animosity [ill will or enmity] then occurred a fierce and hair-raising war among Shiva and Vishnu, as each aspired victory for himself... [1-75-16b, 17a]

By the 'hum' sound of Vishnu that ruinously [ruined] overpowering longbow of Shiva is broken, and the triple-eyed God, Mahadeva, is frozen... [1-75-17b, 18a]

Then Gods along with the assemblages of sages and celestial carana-s have come together and appealed to those two for appeasement [peace] in the matter of wielding [managing] authority, and then those two superior Gods, Shiva and Vishnu, went into a state of amity [friendship]... [1-75-18b, 19a]
On seeing the bow of Shiva rendered inert [lacking the power to move] by the mettlesome-ness [full of vigor and strength of spirit or temperament] of Vishnu, from then on the Gods along with the assemblages of sages deemed Vishnu to be the paramount... [1-75-19b, 20a]

dhanuu rudrah tu sa.mkruddho videhesu mahaayashaah || 1-75-20

devaraatasya raaja riseh dadau haste sa saayakam |

That celebrated Rudra on his part with indignation [anger] has handed over that longbow, which is already fitted with unloosened arrow, to the sagely king among Videha kings, namely Devaraata... [1-75-20b, 21a]

idam ca vaisnavam raama dhanuh para puram jayam || 1-75-21

riciike bhaarhgave praadaat visnuh sa nyaasam uttamam |

Oh, Rama, this alone is that enemy-citadel conquering longbow of Vishnu, and Vishnu handed over this to Sage Riciika, the son of Bhrigu, as a trustworthy trust... [1-75-21b, 22a]

riciikah tu mahaatejaah putrasya apratikarmanah || 1-75-22

pituh mama dadau divyam jamadagneh mahaatmanah |

That great-resplendent [brilliant] Sage Riciika on his part has handed over this divine bow to his son with unmatchable deeds of religious merit, who is my father Sage Jamadagni... [1-75-22b, 23a]
Arjuna vindicated himself when the ascetically powerful father of mine has isolated himself from arsenal [a collection of weapons]... [1-75-23b, 24a]

Oh, Rama, on hearing the unregenerate [difficult to handle] and highly perfidious [faithless] murdering of my father, I rancorously [bitterly] extirpated [wiped out] Kshatriya-s as and when they are born, that too not for one time, but I did so for thirty-seven times going around the earth... and on getting the entire earth under my control I performed Vedic-ritual, and at the end of that Vedic-ritual, I gave all that earth to sage Kashyapa, a sage with divine soul and with pious observances, as a ritualistic-generosity... and I am at present on Mt. Mahendra practicing asceticism and thus conjoined [brought together] are the powers of asceticism in me... [1-75-24b, c, 25, 26a]

On hearing about the breakage of Shiva's longbow, then I promptly came here. Thereby, oh, Rama, wield this supernatural and superlative [supreme] longbow of Vishnu, which is passed on to me from my forefathers and my father. Keep your fealty [exactness] to Kshatriya-hood in view, and wield this as you have wielded Shiva's longbow... [1-75-26b, 27]
yadi shaktah asi kaakutstha dvandvam daasyaami te tatah || 1-75-28

Take an aim with an arrow that conquers enemy's citadels [a fortress that commands a city] fixing it on this supra-mundane longbow... and oh, Kakutstha, should you be capable of it, thereafter I will give you a duel... [1-75-27]

iti vaalmiiki raamaayane aadi kaavye baala kaande pa.nca saptatitamah sargah

Thus, this is the 75th chapter in Bala Kanda of Valmiki Ramayana, the First Epic poem of India.

Sriman Moola Rama Vijayate

References

