

Sarga 67 (Bālakāṇḍa)

Translated by Luke Poeppel

Having heard the words of Janaka, the great sage Viśvāmitra said to the king, “Show the bow to Rāma.” ||1|| Thus, King Janaka instructed his vassals, “Let the divine bow, adorned with fragrant garlands, be brought forth.” ||2|| The vassals commanded by Janaka entered the citadel. Having placed the bow in front, they exited according [in accordance with] to the king’s command. ||3|| The 5,000 great-souled, strong men somehow pulled the eight-wheeled chest. ||4|| Having placed [down] the iron casket in which the bow lies, the vassals said to the God-like King: ||5|| “That precious bow here, O Sovereign King of Mithilā, which you desire to be seen, is revered by all kings.” ||6|| Having heard those words, the king did the añjali and said to the great-souled Viśvāmitra and both Rāma & Laksmana: ||7|| “This bow, O Brahmin, was honored by ancestors and by the most virile kings, all unable to draw it. ||8|| Nor the Suraganas, Asuras, or Raksasas, headed by the Gandharvas & and Yaksas, along with the Kinnaras & Mahoragas. ||9|| What is the path of humans in drawing the bow, in stringing, in fitting the arrow, in brandishing it, and even in raising it? ||10|| Viśvāmitra, chief among sages, let that most excellent bow be shown to the two princes, O Undivided One.” ||11|| Having heard that which was spoken by Janaka, the great-souled Viśvāmitra said to the descendent of Raghu, “O young Rāma, see the bow.” ||12|| On the great sage’s word, Rāma, having opened the chest in which the bow stands, after seeing the bow [now] said: ||13|| “I will now touch this precious bow with my hands, O Brahmin, and will exert myself in raising and drawing it.” ||14|| “Be it so!” said the king and sage in unison. ||15|| In the midst of many thousands of onlookers [watching people], the descendant of Raghu, on the words of the sage, effortlessly grasped the bow. ||16|| The dharmic one playfully strung the bow. Having done so [strung], he drew — but he of great fame, chief among men, broke the bow in half. ||17|| Its sound was like that of a cyclone, and there was a great earthquake, as when a mountain is cleft. ||18|| And all of the stupefied people fell with the sound, with the exception of the excellent sage, the king, and both descendents of Raghu. ||19|| As the people revived, the fear-departed king, [ever] well-spoken, did the añjali and said these words to the excellent sage: ||20|| “O Lord, the prowess of Rāma, son of Daśaratha, has been perceived by me. This exceedingly marvelous and incomprehensible act was not predicted [by me]. ||21|| Having obtained Daśaratha’s son Rāma as her husband, my daughter Sītā will bring fame to the lineage of Janaka[s]. ||22|| O Kauśika, my promise is true that the price of Sītā is heroism. My daughter Sītā, as valuable to me as my life’s breath, is to be given to Rāma. ||23|| O Lord Kauśika, provided your consent, O Brahmin, hail to thee, let the ministers go hastily to Ayodhyā by chariots. ||24|| With humble words, they will bring Daśaratha to the city and wholly explain my offering of Sītā, whose prize is heroism. ||25|| The two ministers and descendents of Kakutstha will report to the King. The honored one must [first] be swiftly brought.” ||26|| And Viśvāmitra said, “So be it!” At that time, the king on those words sent the ministers, those great-souled executors of his commands, to relate the news and bring the king. ||27||