



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.2., 2017 (April-June)

ISSN INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

TEACHING OF RAMAYANA AND THEIR CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

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ABSTRACT

The present paper throws light on the epic text of Ramayana, which is filled with eternal lessons, teachings and reminders that enjoins the readers to tread on the righteous path of Dharma and Karma. The modern day man needs to follow the teachings of Ramayana in order to overcome the ills prevalent in the society. Ramayana teaches us human values and how to follow them. In the present technical world, human values and morality in people is degenerating which can be regenerated through the spiritual epic like Ramayana.

**Keywords-** Dharma, Karma, Human Value, Morality.

The modern society badly requires the Dharma that is enshrined in the epic Ramayana. In present era a son disrespects his father's advice. Devotion to the Guru should be the primary duty of student but students are incorrigibly disrespectful towards teachers. In such a condition, everyone needs to follow the ideals of the Ramayana. The Ramayana speaks of the true identity of the individual, the real meaning of the family and the sanctity of the society. The Ramayana teaches the importance of human values. Today, corruption is rampant in every of human activity viz. business, education and politics. Under these circumstances, the principles of the Ramayana are very important. It explains in detail the relationship that should exist between brothers, the father and the son, the preceptor and the disciple.

We all inhabit the same planet, the same sky is above us, we breathe the same air and drink the same water unmindful of this underlying principle of unity. Man observes diversity, which is a big mistake. The Ramayana centres on the principle of unity in diversity. His inability to see unity in diversity has resulted in all enveloping agitation. The unity in diversity and the divinity behind this unity is thus to be perceived and experienced.

Indian philosophy expounds truth, to speak kindly and softly and never utter unpalatable truth. Social, moral and spiritual ethics encapsulates the above statement. The Ramayana teaches these values in the simplest way. But, man has forgotten the message of the Ramayana and is leading the life of a Ravana. Ravana did not comprehend this principle of divinity. There was no transformation in him though he had acquired and mastered all the Shastras and had done severe penance to propitiate Lord Shiva. He ruined himself on account of excessive lust and arrogance.

Ramayana's Teaching should be put into practice only then man can live a life of peaceful purpose. The relationship that existed between the brothers of Rama is an ideal to the rest of the humanity. They lived in unity in spite of troubles and turmoil. Mother kaikeyi wanted her son Bharata to ascend the throne of

Ayodhya, but Bharata never had any such desire. He went to Chitrakoota mountain, fell at the feet of lord Rama and prayed that Rama being the eldest, should take over the kingdom of Ayodhya. But, Rama did not yield to his request. Quoting the Vedic dictum *Mathru devo bhava, pithru devo Bhava*. He exhorted Bharata to obey the command of the father and fulfil the desire of his mother by becoming the king of Ayodhya. Rama promised him that he would give all help and support.

Ramayana exhorts to transform one's heart by practicing the nobler values of propriety, devotion, steadfastness, and righteousness. True divinity embodies the highest virtues of truth, righteousness, purity, prosperity, fame and beauty. Rama was devoted to the welfare of all. He was the master of all knowledge and the embodiment of all good virtues, which manifested as his divinity. Whoever has these three aspects is essentially divine. In fact, every individual is divine. But due to man's immense attachment with his body he is unable to know his divine nature. So he can experience and enjoy divinity only by treading along the path of love and righteousness shown by lord Rama.

Ramayana teaches us the efficacy of pure love. The cause of man's misery is his constricted love to himself and his family. Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man is what he must practice. Expansion of love is life; contraction of love is death. All are the children of God. Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagvad Gita: *Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhutha Sanathana* (the eternal *Atma* in all bodies is a part of My Being). So, man should have the broad feeling to identify himself with everybody. Humanity can never progress without cordial feelings. When there is such an easy path to divinity, why does one trouble himself to undertake the rigorous spiritual practices of *Japa, Tapa, and Yoga*? Divinity cannot be attained by all these austerities. How easy it is to be divine by loving God's creation.

We must limit our desires. It is aptly said less luggage more comfort makes travel a pleasure. Unlimited desires in the journey of life complicate and compound daily experiences. Desires leads to excessive ambition and unachieved ambitions manifest as frustration and disappointment thereby disturbing the even keel of life. Thus one should lead a divine life (*Divya Jeevanam*), not a mean life (*Deena Jeevanam*). Difficulties are evanescent and fleeting like the passing clouds. Morality comes and always grows. The decline in moral values in today's society is the cause of social unrest.

Rama stands as a shining example of upholding the moral values in the society. When he was asked to proceed to the forest for exile on the eve of his coronation he readily agreed. He maintained his equanimity in the face of adversities unaffected by pain and pleasure, victory and defeat, gain and loss. Rama displayed this virtue of self-control. Today, man aspires for positions of authority though he does not deserve them. But, Rama relinquished exalted position even though he deserved it. He led the life of a *Dheera* (Courageous one), not a *Deena* (weak Minded). Similar was the courage and conviction of his devoted servant (Das) Hanuman, who by contemplating on Rama incessantly, became a *Dheera*. He displayed this quality of courage in the court of Ravana. But the same Hanuman behaved like a *Deena* (humble one) in front of lord Rama and *Dheera* (Courageous one) before the devilish demon the Ravana.

Ramayana teaches us that Spirituality promotes Spirit of Unity. The story of the Ramayana illustrates the ideal relationship that should exist between brothers. Lakshmana and Satrughna served Rama and Bharata respectively with utmost devotion and sincerity. When Lakshmana fainted in the battlefield, Rama lamented, "In this world I might find another mother like Kausalya, a wife like Sita, but definitely not a brother like Lakshmana." A brother should be like this- one who respects elders and brings name and fame to the whole family. It was the unity amongst the brothers that brought reputation to the whole family. The same was the case with the Pandavas also. The five Pandavas could defeat hundred Kauravas as they stood united. Vali and Sugriva were brothers but they fell apart because of disunity. Rama restored the kingdom to Sugriva as he had completely surrendered to him. Similar was the case with Ravana, Vibhishana and Kumbhakarna. Any task can be accomplished if the five fingers are united. In the absence even a small task becomes extremely difficult. Ramayana celebrates the diverse nature of all three wives of the King Dashratha as well as the different nature of all four brothers. When member of the same faculty forget their differences and enjoy the fruits of togetherness, they have a peaceful living. Do not hate anybody. Keep no ill feelings towards others. Hatred and

envy should be shunned. Endear all to attain divinity and experience divine bliss. One's welfare lies in the welfare of the society.

The Ramayana is a universal epic. Its influence stretches across countries, continents, civilization, culture, cults, creeds, classes etc and cultures. It expounds rules for daily life and living. It also propagates the importance of justice, virtue, love and sacrifice. It cautions man against the dangers of the six evils namely *Kama* (lust), *Krodha* (anger), *Lobha* (greed), *Moha* (attachment), *Mada* (pride), and *Matsarya* (envy, jealous). Sita's abduction by Ravana brought about the downfall of Ravana. This great epic teaches that Good always wins over evil as illustrated by the victory of Rama over Ravana.

The epic also emphasizes the relevance of good company. Queen Kaikeyi loved Rama more dearly than her own son Bharata. Manthara, Kaikeyi's handmaiden poisoned her thoughts to commit the hideous act of sending Rama's into fourteen years of exile to the forest. It is important that we maintain a healthy company that motivates us to be righteous.

Hanumanji, the devoted servant stands as an image of implicit faith and love for the lord. His unflinching devotion and service to the Lord Rama is a lesson for humanity. It teaches us to surrender ourselves to the lotus feet of the divine without doubt or question. When we have an attitude of surrender and gratitude towards the almighty, we are sure to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

Lord Rama's simplicity made him an example of greatness for posterity. We should treat everyone equally and never discriminate on the basis of status, sex, age etc. Even animals should be treated with love and kindness. A true human being is one who is kind to all.

Laxmana's conversation with his mother Sumitra before Rama's departure to the forest, where she counsels him on his conduct with Rama and Sita underscores the significance of serving God with devotion which is real heaven and the only path to salvation. Sumitra mentions how it does not matter where Laxmana stays as long as he is with Rama and Sita because true Ayodhya is where Lord Rama is. She teaches Laxmana to serve the lord to the best of his ability.

The stone bridge that was built by monkeys, by merely chanting the name of Lord Rama illustrates the power of faith. An insurmountable obstacle also appears achievable with the grace of God.

In the concluding point, The Ramayana inspires its protagonists for a purposeful and worthy living. The central hero of Ramayana is not a human being, but the Supreme being. Rama is an incarnation of the Supreme Lord playing the role of a human being. So the bonds of all the associates of Rama with him exemplifies of the human-divine relationship that is far more lasting than the best human-human relationship. All human relationship is distressing due to the inevitability of death. But the human divine relationship, when understood as a spiritual relationship between the eternal soul and the eternal supreme, is eternally fulfilling.

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