

16. Perennial Message Of The Ramayana

Sweeter than sugar is Rama's name

Tastier than curds and

Much sweeter than honey.

Full of nectarine sweetness is Rama's name,

Chant ever and anon the name of Rama.

Students! The *Ramayana* depicts the triple qualities of *Sathwa*, *Rajas* and *Thamas*. The relevance of the *Ramayana* is not confined to a particular time, place or circumstances. It is of universal significance for all times. Its relevance is not limited to India alone.

The *Ramayana* holds out Rama as an embodiment of ideal qualities. As a son, friend, husband, master and ruler, He was an ideal without a parallel. In the world one may be an ideal son, but not an ideal friend. One may be an ideal friend, but not an ideal brother. But Rama stands out unique as an embodiment of all ideal attributes.

Students should note an important aspect relating to the breaking of the bow of Shiva at the court of Janaka. Though the bow was broken, the string connecting the two ends of the bow did not break at all, for the two ends of the bow stand for Sita and Rama--*Prakruthi* and Purusha. In fact the bond between Rama and Sita, *Paramaatma* and *Prakruthi* is an unbreakable one. The *Ramayana* demonstrates the inseparable bond between *Prakruthi* and *Purusha*.

The *Ramayana* has been divided into two sections: the *Puurva Ramayana* and the *Utthara Ramayana*. The *Puurva Ramayana* deals with the valorous deeds of Rama, his victory over indomitable heroes like Parashursama, Vaali and Ravana. These events speak of the dauntless courage, the matchless valour and the immense physical and mental prowess of Sri Rama. The *Utthara Ramayana* (the latter half is suffused with *Karuna* (compassion) and seeks to install the Rama *Thathwa* (The Rama Principle) in the hearts of the people.

Rama has no equals as a ruler

The *Ramayana* exemplifies the amity and harmony which should prevail among the members of a family.. It extols the glory of ideal brotherhood, noble friendship and the greatness of love and affection. Rama was an ideal ruler who ruled his people with due regard to their likes and dislikes, having their welfare as his primary concern. As a ruler Rama has no equals. He was a veritable mine of strength, virtue and love. Hence it is essential that every student should take Rama as an ideal to be emulated and derive happiness by practising the ideal of Sri Rama.

The first canto in the *Ramayana* is called *Baalakaanda* (the canto describing the boyhood of Sri Rama). Sage Viswamithra came to Dasaratha and sought the help of his two sons, Rama and Lakshmana, for protecting his *Yaga* (sacrifices). Rama and Lakshmana were fourteen years old when the Sage sought their help. When Dasaratha was hesitating to send his sons in view of their tender age, Viswamithra remarked, "O! Dasaratha!

Swayed by paternal affection, you have mistaken them to be mere mortals, of flesh and blood, whereas in fact they are Divine incarnations. Do not give vent to sadness. They are the embodiments of Divinity. Send your sons with me without any hesitation".

The three *Gunas* in the form of three women

Rama, while going with the Sage, encountered three women of three different temperaments. The first woman he confronted was Tataki of *Thamasik* temperament. The *Thamasik* nature makes a person mistake truth for untruth and untruth for truth. It robs one of the capacity for discrimination. Rama killed Tataki while keeping guard over the performance of Viswamitra's *Yajna*. The two brothers saw to it that the *Yajna* was performed without any obstruction.

After the successful completion of the *Yajna*, Viswamithra proceeded to Mithila, accompanied by Rama and Lakshmana. On the way Rama came to the hermitage of Sage Gauthama. There he absolved Ahalya of the curse which had turned her into a stone. Ahalya might be deemed a woman of *Rajasik* temperament. After imparting moral advice to Ahalya, Rama went to Mithila with Viswamithra.

It was in Mithila that Rama encountered Sita, representing the *Sathwik* quality. Having killed Tataki of the *Thamasik* temperament and redeemed Ahalya representing the *Rajasik* temperament, He accepted Sita, who represented the *Sathwik* quality. The marriage of Sita and Rama is symbolic of the union between *Prakruthi* and Paramaatma. The citizens of Mithila greatly rejoiced hearing about the prospective marriage of Rama and Sita. (Swami recited in His own mellifluous voice a ballad in praise of the wedding of Rama and Sita).

Manifestation of three *Gunas* in Sita's wedding

One of the rites in the marriage ceremony in India is *Thalambraalu* the act of pouring rice on the head of the bridegroom by the bride. Since Janaka, the father of Sita, was immensely rich, he arranged for the pouring, of pearls instead of rice. Sita held a palmful of pearls in her hand over Rama's head. The white pearls in the palms of Sita shone with reddish splendour as her palms were of reddish hue. When she poured the pearls on the white turban Rama wore for the occasion, the pearls shone with the white hue of the turban. The pearls rolling down the body of Sri Rama assumed a dark colour reflecting the bluish colour of Sri Rama.

The pearls shining with reddish hue in the hands of Sita are symbolic of the *Rajo Guna*, conveying the message that one is of *Rajasik* nature in the company of *Prakruthi*. The pearls shining with whitish splendour are symbolic of the *Sathwa Guna* indicating the fact that one acquires the *Sathwik* nature in the company of God. The nature of persons who belonged neither to *Prakruthi* nor God will be *Thamasik* persons like the colour of the pearls that rolled down from Rama's head. People of divine orientation shine with *Sathwik* serenity and purity. People with a worldly outlook display *Rajasik* quality while those who are neither worldly nor Godly are *Thamasik*.

Three qualities of Rama's friends and enemies

As Sri Rama was a king, His friends too were kings. Jambavan, the king of the forest, was a *Sathwik* friend. He became a friend of Rama out of sheer love for him. Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, was a *Rajasik* friend of Rama, who sought Rama's friendship for securing his help. It is out of desire for getting relief from his troubles and tribulations that he sought the help of Rama. Sugriva wanted his kingdom and wife to be restored to him. The third friend was Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana. He represents the *Thamasik* quality, as he belonged to a *Rakshasa* family.

Rama had three enemies, whose qualities represent the three *Gunas*. The first enemy was Vaali, a *Sathwik* enemy because, at the end, he acknowledged his mistakes and accepted the punishment

meted out to him by Rama. Ravana was the second enemy, who harboured hatred for Rama. He refused to acknowledge his mistake and was responsible for the downfall of his country. He was a *Rajasik* enemy because a *Rajasik* enemy never acknowledges his mistakes. The third enemy, Kumbhakarna, was a *Thamasik* enemy. A *Thamasik* person is one who mistakes good to be bad and bad to be good. Rama put an end to all these enemies.

Rama, the redeemer of the fallen

Rama was the redeemer of the *fallen*---*Pathithapaavana*. He redeemed and gave salvation to three characters in the *Ramayana*. They are Sabari, Guha and Jatayu. Sabari was a helpless and hapless old woman with no one to look after her. Her preceptor told her about Lord Rama. She was yearning for the arrival of Ramachandra whom she considered to be her saviour. She was deeply absorbed in the contemplation of Rama's name at all times and in all places. One day sage Matanga said to her, "O, Sabari, Lord Narayana has descended on the earth in the form of Rama. He is living in the garb of an ascetic. He will be soon arriving here. But I will not be alive at the time of his arrival. He is an embodiment of immaculate purity. Greet him and honour him with devotion."

From that day, Sabari started preparing herself for the arrival of Sri Rama. Since she thought that Rama might ask her to give him something to eat, she would gather all sorts of fruits, and to satisfy herself that the fruits were sweet, she would taste them first and keep only the sweetest ones for her Lord. That was how Sabari transformed herself into a *Sathwik* devotee. Rama responded to her inmost prayers and Sabari in the end merged herself in Rama.

Guha, the forest chief, was another to be redeemed by Rama. Though he was a friend of Rama, his life as a forester was filled with wrongful acts; nevertheless, he never gave up contemplation of Lord Rama's name. Among the fallen, he belonged to the *Rajasik* category because of his worldly life.

The third *pathitha* to be redeemed by Rama was Jatayu. He yearned to serve Rama and was eagerly waiting for the arrival of Rama from the day Rama entered the forest, as an ascetic. A great opportunity to serve Rama's cause presented itself to him. When he sighted Ravana carrying Sita away he fought to the bitter end to rescue Sita from Ravana. When he fell mortally wounded and succumbed to the injuries, Lord Rama performed the last rites for Jatayu, a service denied to his father Dasaratha.

What the names of Dasaratha and Ravana signify

After crossing the sea of *Moha* (infatuation), Rama encountered in Lanka the three brothers representing the three qualities of *Sathwa*, *Rajas* and *Thamas*. He crowned Vibhishana, of the serene temperament, King of Lanka, and destroyed Ravana and Kumbhakarna, who symbolised *Rajasik* and *Thamasik* qualities.

Who was Dasaratha? Dasaratha was the emperor of Ayodhya. The word Dasaratha signifies the body endowed with ten senses. These ten senses are five *karmendriyas* and five *jnanendriyas*.

Dasaratha is the chariot drawn by the ten senses. The three wives of Dasaratha represent the three qualities, Kausalya symbolising *Sathwik* quality, Sumitra, *Rajasik* quality and Kaikeyi, *Thamasik* quality.

Who was Ravana? Ravana is described as a demon with ten heads. These ten heads are the six vices, namely desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and jealousy and *Manas* (mind), *Buddhi*

(intellect), *Chitta* (will) and *Ahamkaara* (Ego). Since these ten are present in every human being, all men are Ravana indeed! Whoever beheads all these ten heads in fact becomes a Rama. It is God alone who can behead ten heads! When a man surrenders himself to God, all these ten heads will go and he will merge in Rama.

Four brothers are embodiments of four Vedas

Who are Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna? The four Vedas came in the form of the four brothers to the abode of Dasaratha and sported there. Rama was *Rig Veda* and Lakshmana, who closely followed Rama, was *Yajur Veda*. Bharatha who always delighted in chanting Rama's name, was *Sama Veda* and Satrugna, who obeyed the commands of the three brothers and surrendered himself completely to them, was *Atharva Veda*. Hence the four brothers were the embodiments of the four Vedas.

Lord Rama was *Pranava* itself (AUM). The three brothers are the syllables of "A," "U" and "M" in *Omkaara*. Lakshmana was "A," Bharatha was "U" and Satrugna was "M," and the Lord was the *Pranava*.

We can realise the sacredness of the *Ramayana* when we comprehend its inner significance, instead of being absorbed only in the external form of the narrative.

Institute Auditorium, Brindavan, 25 May 1992

*The easiest path to Self-realisation is the surrender of ego:
sharanaagathi.*

Sathya Sai Baba