

12. Shri Raama : the ideal for humanity

Sweeter than sugareane juice,

Sweeter than honey,

Sweeter than nectar itself is

the name of Raama.

As you chant the name you

taste the nectarine

Sweetness in abundance.

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine Self! The sage Vaalmeekei, who was pure, holy and utterly selfless, wrote the Raamaayana in hundred crores of stanzas for the redemption of mankind. But the *Dhevas and Rishis*, realising the supreme greatness of the Raamaayana, sought from Vaalmeekei a share in his great work.

Responding to their appeal, Vaalmeekei distributed the *shlokas* (verses) among the denizens of the three worlds. After the distribution of the slokas in equal shares among the three one *shloka* of 32 syllables remained. After distributing in equal measure 30 of them, two syllables remained. These two syllables were the letters RAA-MA, which he gave to the dwellers of the three worlds. The same two syllables are found in the names of Krishna, Hari, Jesus, Allah and Saayee. Thus Vaalmeekei offered to the residents of all the three worlds the two-syllable name of the Lord equally.

Raama, the supreme exemplar of many roles in life

Raama is closest to mankind. Wherever they may be, to whatever land or clime they may belong, people everywhere have to understand the Raama principle. Raama was an ideal son. Every family requires an ideal son. On the eve of the coronation he chose to go to the forest as an exile in accordance with the command of his royal father. In carrying out the injunctions of the father, Raama stands out as the supreme exemplar.

Raama, moreover, was an ideal brother. He exemplified harmony and love among brothers. He treated his brothers as his own life-breath and showered his love equally on all of them. Thus Raama is an example of fraternal love for every family.

Raama was an ideal husband. Raama's adherence to the principle of monogamy has to be properly understood. Vaalmeekei understood it very well. One word, one arrow, one wife was the rule for Raama. What is the reason? In the body there are many organs. But all of them are animated, nourished and sustained by the heart alone. In the same manner the wife, for the husband is only one and the husband for the wife is only one. To demonstrate to the world this ideal of monogamy, Raama set the example.

Raama was an ideal friend and ideal enemy

Raama was an ideal friend. There cannot be a greater friend than Raama. There are in the world fair-weather friends who display their friendship when one is wealthy or wielding power. But if wealth and position are gone, not a single friend will show his face. Raama, however, was not such a friend. He was loving, considerate and affectionate equally in weal and woe, in times of

joy or sorrow. Guha was an ordinary boatman. Raama hailed him as his fourth brother and showered his love on Guha. Raama treated in the same friendly spirit everyone who came to him for any help or to find an asylum. He thus stood out to the world as an ideal friend.

Raama was not only an ideal friend; he was also an ideal enemy. In the world, it is common to see **men** resorting to all kinds of deceitful devices to foil their enemies. But Raama never stooped to such unworthy practices. Raama adhered to the noble heroic path **even** in dealing with his enemies.

For example, when Raama was engaged in battle with Raavana, Raavana could not stand up to the arrows of Raama. All the weapons of Raavana were destroyed. Raama noticed that Raavana was tired and weaponless. In such a situation it was not proper to kill the enemy. There is no heroism, in killing a weak or powerless man. The enemy should be destroyed when he is strong and powerful. Recognizing the plight of Raavana, Raama laid down his arms and told Raavana, "O, Raavana! you are tired and without weapons. You are not in a fit condition to carry on the fight. Go home, take rest and return to battle tomorrow. We shall resume the fight tomorrow." By displaying this kind of magnanimity towards his enemy; Raama demonstrated that he was an ideal enemy.

Raama was, first of all, an ideal son. In any country, anywhere in the world, every family needs an ideal son. Hence Raama's story does not have a message for the Bhaaratheeyas alone. It has a lesson for all countries and for all mankind.

The significance of Raama's example of an ideal brother should be realised. Today brothers fight among themselves, go right upto the Supreme Court and even lose their lives in their bitter quarrels. Out of love for petty, money and possessions, today people are prepared to sacrifice all fraternal feelings. Raama's way was different. He regarded his brothers as part of his own being and would not cause the slightest pain to them. Thereby he took his brothers to the supreme state. Today brothers take their litigation to the Supreme Court! This is not right at all.

Raama, the ideal husband

Raama was an ideal husband. When Seetha was abducted, Raama felt the loss as if he had lost half his body. He looked upon his wife as *ardhaangi*, one half of himself. When Raama appeared grief-stricken over the absence of Seetha he wanted to merely show to the world what the loss of a wife means. He never thought of a second wife. Raama felt, "it is my duty to protect my wife." Every husband in the world should have a similar conviction.

Today in the world, friends turn into enemies overnight. This is not right at all. Friendship should be enduring and last for all time. Normally it lasts as long as one has wealth and strength. But God's friendship is not like that. God is always with you, in you, behind you, around you. This is the kind of friendship that every man should experience.

Let love rule the world

Hanumaan was a servant. He exemplified the ideal of a servant. Raama embraced Hanumaan and said- "Dear friend, Hanumaan! You in your physical form belong to a different species. You are a monkey and I am a man. But the love principle is one and the same in both of us." Caste and creed may vary. But the love principle is one. In all beings, in all countries, in all individuals love animates every one. Today the reign of this love principle has to be established all over the world. God is the Indweller in the heart. The heart is full of love. That love must be shared with

others. It is only when the love is shared that the old saying about equal-mindedness in joy and sorrow, in gain and loss, will be realised.

Here is an illustration of this truth- Many people in Ayodhya knew that Raama was leaving for the forest. One aged and poor *Brahmana* exclaimed: "I hear Raama is going to the forest for fourteen years. I do not know whether I will live so long." Feeling thus, the old *Brahmana*, *Thrijata* by name, came all the way on foot to have a last glimpse of Raama. Eyes are given to man not to look at the world but to see God. Hence, the power of sight should be dedicated to God. With that aim, the old man, after enduring many hardships, came to Raama. What was Raama doing at that moment? The one who was to be crowned at one moment was getting ready to go on exile to the forest that very moment. Will any human being be able to bear such a reversal of fortune with equal-mindedness? Will he be able to look upon both in the same manner? Anyone other than Raama would be plunged in grief. But Raama (before leaving for the forest) was engaged in giving away to the poor all his jewels and possessions. What should have been a moment of distress was turned by Raama into an occasion for joy in distributing all to the people. Nothing is lasting in human life. No one can tell when life will come to an end, where, in what circumstances. Life may end in childhood, adolescence, middle age or old age. Death is certain. Hence man must learn to give up attachment to possessions.

Raama and the old *Brahmana*

Raama was giving away all his things. When the old *Brahmana* approached him, he was distributing his cows and furniture. When Thrijata saw this he exclaimed: "What an embodiment of sacrifice is the Lord! He is truly immortal, because of his acting up to the *Vedhic dictum* that immortality can be achieved only through sacrifice and not through good deeds, progeny or wealth. He is the embodiment of bliss. He is the very form of *Dharma*." Looking at Raama, he exclaimed- "Raama! You are indeed the embodiment of *Dharma*!"

Dharma (Righteousness) is the life-breath of everybody. For this *Dharma*, sacrifice is one element. For *Dharma and Thyaaga* (sacrifice), *Prema* (Love) is the basis. Hence *Dharma, Thyaaga and Prema* are essential for every human being. They are the three forces which activate the body, the mind and the Aathma (Divine Self).

Seeing the aged *Brahmana* Raama beckoned to him to come near him. He asked him: "O noble *Brahmana*! What for have you come?" The old man replied- "Svaami! I am advanced in years. I learnt that you are going to the forest for fourteen years. I do not know whether I may live that long. I wish to gaze your splendrous face for once, experience your love for at least a brief moment, touch your sacred feet, and redeem my life." Raama asked him: "Have you no other desire?" "I do not have any other desire. I have difficulty in living. But I am reconciled to what I deserve according to my Karma. I am not concerned about it. I am only keen to have a vision of you, to speak to you and touch you."

Three problems that haunt a man

Then Raama asked him what the benefit was from these three. "*Dharshanam paapa naashanam*" (vision of the Lord destroys all sins). "*Sparshanam karma vimochanam*" (touching the feet of the Lord frees one from the bondage of *Karma*). "*Sambhaashanam sankata naashanam*" (conversing with the Lord dispels all distress). The old man said: "Svaami! Man is haunted by three problems - sin, consequences of his deeds and sorrow. To get rid of these things, I need a vision of you, contact with your feet and conversation with you."

Raama was supremely pleased with the *Brahmana's* words. He drew him close to himself, embraced him and asked him: "Does this give you joy?" Shedding copious tears, the old man said- "I do not know what is heaven. I have no idea what is Kailaash or Vaikuntha. But in your embrace I have experienced all these. This is my heaven. Give me. some alms. I. shall return to my place." Raama said- "Child! When you have offered me your love, I must offer my love to you in return. That is the way of love--give and take. As I have received your love, you must accept something from me".

The old man carried a stick in his hand. Raama said "Child! Through my touch, you have received considerable strength. Your old age has disappeared. Cast your stick as far as your strength will permit. All the wealth and the cows in the area covered by your throw will be yours.

Raama's touch had endowed the old *Brahmana* with immense strength. He felt that he should act upto Raama's command. "My life will be meaningless otherwise," he thought, "Although I have no desire, I shall obey Raama's command." With this feeling, he hurled the stick with all his might. Thanks to the power of Raama, the stick traversed the banks of the Sarayu and returned to where Raama stood. Several mansions, buildings and cattle were within the area which came to the *Brahmana* as Raama's gift.

Raama's supreme quality is sacrifice

The Brahmana said to Raama: "O Lord! When I came solely to have a vision of you, why are you Burdening me with so many possessions?" Raama replied, "O noble *Brahmana!* This is the fruit of your good deeds in your previous life, this is not the reward earned in the present life. Imagine how many came to see me from afar while I was preparing to leave for the forest? It is your wish which stirred my love. But for the laws relating to the governance of a kingdom, I would have given this entire kingdom to you. My love for you is my greatest gift."

So saying, Raama gave the land to the *Brahmana*. Then the *Brahmana* said: "This is a supreme example to all the people. Even at the moment when He was leaving for the forest and the whole of Ayodhya was plunged in grief, Raama displayed His love by giving away all His. possessions. His supreme quality is sacrifice !"

Raama's entire life was filled with ideals of every kind

Thus, the Raama principle teaches us the supremacy of the qualities of charity and sacrifice. The Raama principle does not embody just one or two great qualities. Raama's entire life was filled with ideals of every kind.

To convey the great lessons of Raama's life-story to mankind, the divine incarnates from time to time and from age to age. When does the Lord incarnate? The answer is given in the Geetha: "To protect the good, to punish the wicked and establish *Dharma*, the Lord incarnates from aeon to aeon." When the pure, the saintly, the Godly and the good are oppressed, the Lord incarnates to protect them and to punish the wicked. To relieve their suffering and to confer bliss on humanity, the Lord makes his descent on earth. When wickedness grows and the forces of evil rear their heads, the Lord comes down to put them down and establish righteousness among mankind.

Today falsehood, injustice and wickedness are rampant in the world. Humanness has been reduced to dust. Behind the human form, there are no human qualities. Human values have been given the go-by. Love does not prevail between man and man. If love is lost, what remains? Love is life. A man without love is a living corpse.

Therefore cultivate love. Share it. Live in love. This is the need of the Kali age. There is another episode in the Raamaayana, which indicates what love the people of Ayodhya and Mithila bore to Raama and Seetha. The people of Ayodhya set out in their thousands to witness the wedding of Raama and Seetha in Mithila. The whole of Mithila was rejoicing over the auspicious occasion. Women were summoning all women and children to witness the sacred wedding. They were telling the other ladies: "Sisters! What a unique opportunity to witness the glorious wedding of Raama and Seetha!"

Symbolic meaning of wedding of Raama and Seetha

The wedding of Raama and Seetha is not a wedding of one young man and one young woman. This wedding is a union of *Prakrithi* (Cosmos) with the *Purusha* (Supreme Lord). An old lady sang a song calling upon all women to join the company of people going for the wedding. She described the decorations in Mithila, the divine beauty of Raama and Seetha, the splendid scene in the palace and depicted the memorable scenes they would witness at the wedding. (Svaami sang the song in his own mellifluous voice with such verve and charm that the entire wedding scene seemed to appear in all its splendour before the gathering). A similar appeal went forth from the men's side to all men, describing the wedding as an occasion that would eradicate all the beholders of their sins. "Come, all ye, for the glorious wedding of Kaushalya's son" was the refrain of the song.

The whole world seemed to rejoice at the wedding of Raama and Seetha, because it had its cosmic significance. It represented the union of *Prakrithi* (Seetha) with *Purusha*, the Super Absolute. Every being in the cosmos, whatever may be the gender, in external form, is essentially feminine. *Prakrithi* (Nature) is feminine. She represents one half of the *Lord--Ardhaangi*. *The Paramaathma* (the Supreme Overself) is the *Purusha* (the Supreme Godhead). Together, *Prakrithi and Purusha* represent the concept of, *Ardha naareeshvara--the* Divine conceived as half-male and half female. This union of male and female is found in every human being. Every one should understand this aspect of the Raamaayana story.

Raamaayana should not be considered as-a sacred epic for Bhaaratheeyas alone. The term Raama means "One who delights the heart" "*Ramayathi ithi Raamah.*" Whomsoever you may worship it is the one Divine who delights the heart. There is only one God and one Goal.

God is one

When you consider mankind as one species, God is only one, by whatever name you may describe Him, as Allah, Jesus, Raama, Krishna or Buddha. The Bhaaratheeyas hold to the belief that God is one, though the wise may call him, by different names. All religious scriptures and godly men have in all ages worshipped God as one. Therefore, no one should have feelings of differences or even entertain ill-will towards others, Cultivate the feeling of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of Man. Bear no ill-will towards anyone. Help ever; hurt never.

Raama showered his love on everyone. Love is the most important factor in life. Love is God. Live in love.

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