

11. The perennial message of the Raama story

In this phenomenal world, all forms manifest peace.

All names are auspicious.

Sath-Chith-Aanandha express the One Absolute.

Its attributes are: Truth, Beauty, Goodness.

The Supreme, that is to be

Comprehended through the Vedhas,

Took birth as the son of Dhasharatha,

Became the soul of Raamaayana of Vaalmeeki

(Sanskrit verses).

VAALMEEKI proclaimed in the Raamaayana that the supreme Lord took His birth as the son of Dhasharatha and shone as the embodiment of the *Vedhas*. Nevertheless Vaalmeeki described the saga of Raama as that of an ordinary human being. Vaalmeeki saw the Divine in Raama as an ordinary human being. Raavana saw Raama entirely as a mere man.

The entire Raamaayana is like a game of chess. The scene in the Raamaayana is a kind of battlefield. It is a battlefield where the forces of right and wrong are waging war. Raama represents righteousness and Raavana represents unrighteousness. The battle between the two is the war fought on the battlefield.

Selfish desire is the root cause of Raavana's ruin

Raavana taught a great lesson to the world. He exclaimed: "Oh men! Do not live as I have lived and ruin your lives." What is the root cause of Raavana's ruin? Unable to conquer his desires, unwilling to get rid of his impulses, he ruined his entire clan. His sons were killed. His brother and other kinsmen were killed and ultimately his country itself was reduced to ashes. Raavana confessed- "In the end I ruined myself." This was the message Raavana gave to his countrymen in his last moments.

Only by suppressing desires does a man manifest his humanness. A man who is unable to put an end to his desires, puts an end to himself.

A good man by his good conduct achieves greatness. Raavana sought to achieve greatness but did not strive to lead a good life.

Raama's career is different. He aspired only to be a good man and did not seek greatness.

The world today is in dire need of the message of the Raama story. For one thing, sons today do not follow the injunctions of their fathers. Fathers do not set the right example to the children. Disciples do not respect the preceptors properly. Preceptors do not treat the disciples with affection. There is no love lost even between friends. Relations are estranged among themselves. In all fields of life---in the administration, in agriculture or in business or politics-----discord is rampant. Divisions and conflict prevail in social, political and even spiritual fields. If you enquire into the causes for this situation you find that selfishness is at the root of it all.

The basic elements are common to all mankind. The world itself is one family. All men are brothers. Raama preached to the world this basic truth. He taught the world the duties of everyday life, the social duties and family obligations. This triple stream of duties is the message of the Raamaayana. Whoever bathes in this triple stream is absolved of his sins and is redeemed. Such a great work as the Raamaayana has to be read, reread and lived upto by everyone.

The great qualities of Raama are countless

It is impossible to describe the greatness of the life of Raama. The great qualities of Raama are countless.

Vaalmeeki wrote his Raamaayana while Raama was still reigning over the kingdom. Raama was ruling over Ayodhya at that time. What does Ayodhya signify? It symbolises the place which cannot be penetrated by evil forces and which is invincible. That place is the heart. That is the place where Raama resides.

What is needed today is to make every human heart an Ayodhya. It should be free from any kind of pollution. It should be pure and firm. Then there will be room in it for the story of Raama to enter.

After completing his great epic, Vaalmeeki was considering how to make it known to the world and how to sanctify the lives of people by spreading its message. The Raamaayana evokes joy in the listeners by the very sweetness of its poetry. Its *shlokas* (verses) relieve people of their sorrow. Kusha and Lava (the sons of Seetha) who were dressed like ascetics and who could sing melodiously and move the hearts of the listeners by their charming music, came to Vaalmeeki and offered their salutations to the sage. The two children were like twin birds. They were extraordinary children. They were utterly fearless. They would not shrink from anyone out of fear.

When the two appeared before Vaalmeeki, the sage told them-"Children! I have composed the Raamaayana with a pure and unsullied heart through arduous effort. You should proclaim to the world this sacred story." Lava and Kusha reverentially accepted the sage's command. They offered their *pranaams* (salutations) to Vaalmeeki and said: "*Guruji!* Give us your benediction. We shall go forth into the world and make the Raamaayana known to every nook and corner of the land."

At one place, many sages had come together in a big assembly. Lava and Kusha went to them and sang the Raamaayana in their sweet voice. The sages listened to their recitation in rapture, oblivious to everything. They felt that such moving story should be propagated to the whole world.

The Raamaayana in blissful song

The two boys went along singing and entered Ayodhya. Standing in the heart of the city they went on singing the Raamaayana.

All the people strolling on the road stopped to listen to the song. They were rooted to their places and were lost in the music of the great epic. This is known as *Bhaava-samaadhi* (the state of blissful feeling). The hearts of the listeners were filled with the bliss of the soulful music. At that moment Raama was coming in his chariot to the spot. He heard the singing. Returning to the palace, he sent word to the two boys to come to his palace for singing their songs. In this manner

Lava and Kusha sang the story of Raama in a manner that moved the hearts of one and all--from commoners to King Raama himself.

Raama story: great ordeals met with fortitude

Thus Raama himself enjoyed the narration of his story in song. He posed as if he did not know his own story. In this context, the human aspect of Raama should be noted. He lived like a common man, but ordinary men did not live like Raama. That is the secret of this phenomenon. Though Raama was divine, he moved about like an ordinary-man. Common men should live like Raama to manifest their divinity. It is not enough to recognise the human aspects of Raama. People should also realise the divinity in everyone.

Raama dwells in the heart of everyone. "*Ramayathi ithi Raamah*" (Raama is the one who pleases). The word Raama has another meaning. It refers to a *three* (woman). Raamaayana means that it is the story of Seetha. Hence Raamaayana is esteemed as the story of both Raama and Seetha.

In the sacred epic of Raamaayana many profound secrets and truths are embedded. But Raama did not impart these secrets to anyone at anytime. What is the reason? A ripe fruit is bound to fall. Raama felt that people will realise the truth spontaneously when their hearts ripen in due course. Because Raama faced all the ordeals, troubles and difficulties of life with great fortitude, he was hailed as Raamachandhrumurthi. Raama taught the world how to remain unruffled in the presence of difficulties or joys, in pain or pleasure. He responded with a smile to any criticism. He did not exult over praise. Thus he displayed total equanimity in weal or woe, success or defeat, gain or loss. This is the attitude which everyone should cultivate.

Today devotees tend to get elated when they experience pleasure and get depressed when they face adversity. This is the result of attachment to the body. In Raama's days, there was not this body consciousness. People were indifferent to the body. They were immersed in *Aathmaanandam* (the bliss of the Spirit).

Aathmaabhiraama and *Abhinaya-raama* (Raama the Divine Spirit and Raama the actor). Raama acted his role without attachment to the body. People today perform many spiritual exercises. They study many scriptures and engage themselves in meditation and *bhajans*. They sing the glories of God and offer prayers. All these are external exercises. No one asks himself what for all these are being done and for whose sake. They are being done with selfish interests in view.

Revere the Guru truly and not out of self interest

There used to be a preceptor and a disciple. The disciple used to carry out the preceptor's commands. He did not know what for he was doing all that the *guru* asked him to shut himself in a room and perform *saadhana*. The disciple was doing as he was told. Meditation had to be done three times a day--morning, noon and evening--according to *the guru's* directives.

One day he was offering worship to *the guru* at noon. At that moment the *guru* came to his house. It was very warm outside. The heat was scorching the feet. The preceptor could not bear the heat and cried out- "*Shishya! Shishya!*" and knocked at the door. The disciple asked from inside, "Who are you? You are disturbing my *puuja*." The preceptor answered. "I am *your guru*." The disciple said: "You should not interfere with my *saadhana*. Please wait for a while." *The guru* asked- "Whom are you worshipping?" The disciple replied, "I am worshipping you."

The disciple was worshipping *the guru*, but kept him standing in the scorching heat. This is the way spiritual *saadhana* is being done these days. What is the purpose of worshipping *the guru*? Why all this *saadhana*? They are being done out of self-interest and not to revere *the guru* truly.

Likewise, what is the use of claiming to worship Raama without realising Raama as the indweller in the heart? It is only a physical exercise related to the body. The first requisite for all spiritual aspirants is *Aathma-abhimaanam* (spiritual yearning). Attachment to the body should be given up.

True devotion calls for control over senses

It was because of his attachment to the body that Raavana was a prey, to all kinds of troubles.

This was the message given by Raavana: "Oh people! Because I could not kill my bodily impulses I killed myself. I destroyed my entire breed. Hence, be warned from my fate."

Raama's message was: "Citizens! Live like me and achieve a worthy end."

Raavana met with a *Dhurgathi* (bad end). Raama achieved a *Sadhgathi* (glorious destiny). Raavana had *Dhurmathi* (a wicked mind). Raama's was a *Sumathi* (pure mind). Raama's words were righteous. Raavana's words were evil.

Hence, people should strive to have pure minds. People take any number of births but there is no transformation of their minds. Without such transformation all spiritual practices are utterly useless. The Raama principle offers to the people a sacred path to God-realization.

After the completion of his *Yaaga* (sacrifice), Vishvaamithra took Raama and Lakshmana to Mithila. Both of them saw the beautiful places in Mithila. They knew that they would have to witness the lifting of Shiva's bow the next day and then return to Ayodhya. They wanted to go round, the great city of Janaka. Raama told Lakshmana that they were under the care of Vishvaamithra and should not do anything without the permission of *the guru* (sage). They approached the sage with their request. He told them, "You have incarnated on earth to protect all the world and put down the evil forces. Do go round the city of Mithila and sanctify all the people of the city"

Raama and Lakshmana set out to go round the city. As they were going, it seemed as if they were illuminating every place where they went. Everywhere the people looked at them without a wink. Children playing on the streets rushed towards them on seeing them and lovingly clasped their hands. "Uncles! Where from have you come? Please visit our homes," cried all the children. Everyone was attracted by the brothers. Ladies going on the toads were keen to see the beautiful eyes of the two brothers. They scattered flowers in front of them hoping that Raama would look at them. But Raama never looked at women. He went on with his head bowed. This was one of the lessons taught by Raama. True devotion calls for control over the senses (the eyes, the ears, speech, etc.) Because Raama had control over senses, he could win the hand of Seetha (daughter of the Earth). If we wish to control the external world, we have to control our vision. One who has no control over his vision becomes a slave to the world. Such profound lessons can be gathered from the illustrious story of Raama.

Dhasharatha's readiness to hand over rulership to Raama

Here is another episode- Dhasharatha was sleeping in his palace. He had a dream. In that dream he saw that the whole ocean had dried up, the moon was falling in a myriad pieces, an elephant in rut was tumbling down and collapsing, with the howdah on its back falling apart. He woke up

with a start. "What is all this? It is said that a dream in the early hours of the morning portends what is to happen. It is now the fourth quarter of the night. What does this dream portend?" thought Dhasharatha. He got up from his bed. He stood before a mirror. He noticed a bizarre change in his face. He saw grey hairs stretching out between his two ears. He realised that old age was creeping on him. He tried to drink a glass of water. He noticed that his hand was trembling. He could see that his organs were beginning to fail. He felt that he could carry on his reign as long as his senses were perfect. But now they were declining.

He went out and summoned all his ministers and the preceptor. He told them: "I have reigned for as long as I could. I sought always to please my subjects in every way. I looked after their welfare as that of my own children. This kind of feeling is possessed only by Raama. The time is appropriate to install Raama as the heir to the throne."

The subjects and ministers present suggested that the king was fit to continue to rule for some more time. Dhasharatha felt that perhaps they were not in favour of Raama's coronation as king. They submitted to the king: "Mahaaraaja! We are well aware of Raama's sterling qualities. But he is still inexperienced in the arts of administration. You may install him as Yuvaraaja (Crown Prince) and give him guidance."

But Dhasharatha told them that when his senses had begun to weaken, it was not proper for him to continue as king.

Sing the glories of the Lord like Lava and Kusha

Today, people who have lost their sight, are hard of hearing and are not able to move about, still want to stick to their offices. The reign, of Dhasharatha was different. He was a *Dhaarmik* ruler. It was a government based on justice and morality. When Lava and Kusha went about singing the glories of Raama they had no nervousness or apprehension. Today, young persons hesitate to put on any auspicious marks on the forehead when they visit temples and do not venture to fold their palms in reverence when they meet ciders. On the contrary, Lava and Kusha forgot all bodily considerations and sang from their hearts the glory of Raama. They thus taught what is relevant to youths today--the path to a God-oriented life. There is nothing greater than chanting the name of the Lord.

People are eager to listen to gossip.

But the ears are deaf to the sweet names of God.

You do not hesitate to go to the films endlessly;

But your eyes find it hard to look at God in the sanctum.

What for are the eyes given? What for do you have ears? You should remember God's name and go to the abode of God.

In this manner Lava and Kusha went about glorifying the greatness of Raama joyously and telling the people how they should adore God.

Naamasmarana should emanate from the heart

Today's youth should take a resolve to spread the love of God among the people without any hesitations or fear. They should make every man realise the sweetness of the Lord's name, the divinity enshrined in it and the purity associated with it. These feelings should emanate from the heart. That is true *naamasmarana* (reciting the Lord's name).

The Raamaayana propagated the great ideals of Raama in song and story. Raama was ever auspicious, ever the heroic wielder of the bow (*Kodhanda-Raama*), ever the anointed ruler (*Pattaabhi-Raama*), and the Divine indweller in the heart. People have to enthrone Him in their hearts and adore Him. Thyaagaraaja grew ecstatic when he sang about Raama and His various attributes and glories. (Svaami sang melliflously Thyaagaraaja's song beginning with the words: "Raama! Kodhanda Raama! Raama! Pattaabhiraama!"---- "Raama! You stand by the word you have given. For me, you are the only wealth. Your song is the only song. Your path is the only path. Raama! You are *Seethapathi* (the consort of seetha). You are the *Gathi* (the goal). I bow to you. I surrender to you, Oh Raama. Raama! Your name is supreme. Raama! Thoughts of you are enough. Raama! I am yours. Please speak to me.") ·

The great devotees of Raama revelled in singing the glories of Raama in this manner.

Such a moving and inspiring story as the epic of Raama cannot be found in any other country or language. Even after thousands of years, the story of Raama continues to be related in innumerable villages and cities.

Experience Raama in your heart

In Bharath today there is no place where Raama's name is not chanted or *dhaanam* (charity) is not practised. Even in the tiniest hamlet there will be a small Raama temple. But these temples are not so very important. The temple in which Raama should be worshipped is your heart. God is the *Hridayavaasi* (dweller in the heart). You need not seek Raama anywhere else. Without going out anywhere, without incurring any expense, you can experience Raama in your heart and achieve liberation.

Today, on Shri Raamanavami Day, in spite of the good fortune of being born in the *Raama Janmabhumi* (sacred birth place of Raama) you are not recognising the Raama Principle. There is nothing great about celebrating the birthdays of great persons. You must put into practice the teachings of those great figures. What is the use in celebrating birthdays and ignoring the teachings? Practice is the touchstone of devotion.

Knowing the ephemeral nature of the body, people should follow the conscience and lead a godly life. That is true devotion to Raama. You should dedicate your body, mind and everything, to God.

God is the embodiment of love. You should promote love in your hearts. Turn your mind to God before the end comes. It may come at any time.

Outgrow body consciousness in divine feelings

Vaalmeekee prostrated before Raama and confessed- "I have done no penance or spiritual experiences of any kind. By the constant chanting of your name I have been blessed with this beautiful experience. In my youth I had committed many atrocities and incurred many sins out of selfish motives. But, ultimately, chanting your name, I forgot my body altogether. An anthill grew over me. But the name Raama came out of it."

That is what everyone should aim at. Outgrow the body consciousness and merge in the Raama principle. You must eschew all worldly attachments and fix your mind on God.

Make good use of the Sai who has come to you.

Adore the feet of this Lord at Parthi.

Offer your devotion and achieve liberation.

Do-not go after all and sundry.

Awake! Abandon your delusion.

(Telugu poem)

Develop such divine feelings. Do not go after power and pelf. The people of Ayodhya concentrated on their dutes. They considered duty as worship.

When Raama was leaving for the forest the people of Ayodhya were in deep distress. They did not want to stay in Ayodhya without Raama there. Every man, woman and child was in agony at that time. That was the intensity of their devotion to Raama. The same devotion should fill your hearts today.

Dhasharatha had eight dedicated and truthful ministers. He had great sages like Vasishta and Vaamadheva as preceptors. If we had such. ministers and preceptors today we can have Raama Raajya.

Develop faith in Raama and cultivate love for Raama. Love and faith are most important.

Discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindhaavan, on 16-4-1997.

You have to busy yourselves with activity in order to use time and skill to the best advantage. That is your duty, and duty is God. The dull and the inert will hesitate to be active, for fear of exhaustion or failure or loss. The emotional, passionate individuals will plunge headlong and crave for quick results and will be disappointed if they do not come in. The balanced persons will be active, because it is their duty; they will not be agitated by anything failure or success. The godly will take up activity as a means of worshipping God and they leave the results to God. They know that they are but instruments in the hands of God.

Baba