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Harmony and Beauty in Ramayana

*Daivadinam jagat Sarvam
Sathyadinam tu Daivatam
Tat Sathyam Uttamadinam
Uttamo Paradevata*

*The entire creation is under the control of God.
That God is under the control of Truth.
That truth is under the control of noble ones.
The noble people are greater than gods.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

THE society today is in utter need of *Ramayana*. We do not have children who respect their parents, nor do we have parents who have great affection for their children. We do not have disciples today who revere their preceptors; nor do we have preceptors who have great love for their

disciples. We do not have homes where parents shine as role models for their children. We do not have homes where brothers live with mutual love and affection; nor do we have homes where wives and husbands shine as ideals to others by virtue of their mutual love and affection. Good manners and courtesies have vanished. The *Ramayana* stands as an ideal for the trouble-torn society of today in various fields of activities.

House is the First School

The parents of today do not bother to find out the ways and means of bringing up their children and keeping them under control. They think that their responsibility is over after admitting them into a primary school or a village school. *Home is the first school for children.* It is in this school that children should learn to respect their parents; to observe Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Non-violence; how to behave in the school; how to respect the teachers; and how to behave with fellow students. They must also know how to abide by the rules and regulations of the school and how to observe discipline. It is by learning these things that the students turn into ideal students.

Wake up from bed,

When the cock crows in the morn:

Brush and bathe,

Eat properly

And moderately.

Go to school

And study diligently.

Earn a good name that

You are an obedient student.

Don't move

When weather is damp.

And never go near ditches.

Run and play

Have fun and frolic.

If you abide by

All the principles mentioned above

You will enjoy both health and wealth.

But nobody is imparting such a teaching to the children.

Vishwamitra in Ayodhya

When sage Vishwamitra came to Dasaratha, the emperor received him with all courtesy, invited him to occupy a high seat and yearned to know the reason for the sage's arrival, and, without entertaining any shadow of doubt, offered to render any service the sage needed. When people come to our house, it is essential that we treat them respectfully and give joy to them. The sage told the emperor, "O Dasaratha! I have decided to

conduct a *Yagna* for the welfare of the world. But the demons pose many impediments to the conduct of the *Yagna*. I have the power and the strength to counter them, for I have powerful weapons at my command. But the austerities of the *Yagna* forbid me to use them when I myself am performing it. Violence and bloodshed are prohibited for a rithwic performing a *Yagna*. I therefore seek the help of your sons to accompany me to protect the *Yagna*, which I am going to perform for the welfare and well-being of the world.” These words came as a shock to Dasaratha. He did not like the idea of sending the tender little boys to the forest. He thought that it was unjust on his part to send them to the forest. He told the sage, “Master, pardon me. I will assume the responsibility for the protection of the *Yagna*. These boys are quite young, hardly fourteen years old. They are not well acquainted in the art of using weapons. How can they protect the *Yagna*?” Vishwamitra pretended to be angry when he heard the words of the king. He roared, “The descendants of Ikshvaku never go back on their promises. You have promised me that you would certainly honour my request. It is unfair on your part to go back on your word. If you think that you are correct I am going back.” Dasaratha took to heart the words spoken by Vishwamitra. He knew that he should be extremely careful in dealing with *Paamulu* (snakes) and *Swamulu* (sages). He also feared that Vishwamitra might curse him. He called Vasishta, the family guru and

held deliberations with him. It satisfied Dasaratha to some extent. Sage Vasishta looked at Dasaratha and said to him, “These youths are not ordinary boys. You are downcast because of your attachment to your children. They will fall upon the enemies like thunderbolts. You are not able to appreciate that they are the Divine might itself in human form.” Then Vasishta called for Rama. Rama came and stood in front of Vasishta. Lakshmana also came, as it was his practice to be with Rama always. Dasaratha introduced his sons to Vishwamitra. They offered their salutations to their father Dasaratha, guru Vasishta and sage Vishwamitra. They stood waiting there. Vishwamitra was transfixed looking at the splendour on their faces. He desired to do *namaskar* to the children. But it was not appropriate to do *namaskar* to the young boys openly. So he saluted them in his heart. The pairs of brothers Rama and Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna always moved together. Lakshmana followed Rama like a shadow. Shatrughna always followed Bharatha. There was a reason for this.

Why the Brothers were in Pairs

When Dasaratha performed the *Putrakameshti Yaga*, the *Yajna Purusha* appeared and offered the vessel of sacred pudding to Vasishta. Vasishta handed over the sacred vessel to Dasaratha who in turn distributed it equally between his three wives. Kausalya had the confidence that the son born to her would be the

king of Ayodhya as she was the eldest queen. Kaikeyi also had the confidence that the son born to her would one day be coronated because Dasaratha had promised so to her father at the time of marriage. But the virtuous Sumitra had no such hopes. As the emperor did not make any promise to her, she thought that her son would only serve the king. She carried her share of pudding in a bowl and placed it on the parapet wall of the terrace while drying her hair. From nowhere an eagle came and carried away the bowl of sacred pudding. Horrified at this, she immediately ran down and informed Kausalya and Kaikeyi about what had happened. Since Kausalya and Kaikeyi were virtuous, they shared their sacred pudding with her.

The queens were noble without an iota of selfishness or jealousy. They shone as examples of harmony, understanding and mutual love. Their conduct is worthy of emulation in the current times. The three queens offered their prayers and partook of the sacred pudding. Kausalya gave birth to Rama first; and then Kaikeyi to Bharatha and lastly Sumitra gave birth to Lakshmana and Shatrughna together. The sons of Kausalya and Kaikeyi were happily playing in the cradle whereas the sons of Sumitra were wailing all the time, day and night, without even taking food. Sumitra went to sage Vasishta and told about her wailing children. Sage Vasishta closed his eyes and went into yogic vision. The

truth dawned on him. He said to Sumitra, “As you partook of the sacred pudding given by Kausalya, you gave birth to Lakshmana who is an *amsa* (part) of Rama. As you ate the pudding given by Kaikeyi, you gave birth to Shatrughna who is a part of Bharatha. Place Lakshmana by the side of Rama and Shatrughna by the side of Bharatha. They will rest peacefully.” Sumitra did as instructed by Vasishta. All the children slept peacefully without crying. Sumitra felt very happy at this and said to Kausalya and Kaikeyi “Lakshmana and Shatrughna are your gifts. My children will serve your children. Lakshmana will serve Rama and Shatrughna will serve Bharatha. It is my good fortune that my sons will serve others.”

Rama and Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna were intimately connected. Wherever Rama went, Lakshmana followed him. Rama would not eat food unless Lakshmana ate with him. Similarly Bharatha also would not eat food unless Shatrughna was in his company. When Bharatha went to see his uncle, the King of Kashmir, Shatrughna too followed him even though no one told him to do so. When Rama was leaving for the forest, Lakshmana also started following him though Rama had not told Lakshmana to accompany him. Rama even told Lakshmana, “Brother! You should remain in Ayodhya to serve our parents who will be pining away in my absence. It is your duty to

console them and give happiness to them.” To this, Lakshmana answered, “Brother! My mother has sent me to serve you. You are going to the forest in obedience to the command of our father, whereas I am following you in obedience to the command of my mother.” Lakshmana followed Rama wherever he went. Similar was the case with Shatrughna, who was always in the company of Bharata.

Ideal Consorts for Ideal Sons

When the four sons of Dasaratha returned to Ayodhya from Mithila accompanied by their consorts, Dasaratha was overjoyed. He told them, “These four consorts of yours are highly noble and virtuous. I will look after them as though they are my daughters. It is by the Divine grace that I have such daughters-in-law. Where is Mithila and where is Ayodhya? It is Divine will that all of them should be united like this.” These four consorts of the four sons of Dasaratha were of exemplary excellence. Sita and Urmila were the daughters of Janaka, and married Rama and Lakshmana, respectively. Mandavi and Shrutakeerthi who were the daughters of Kushadhwaaja, Janaka’s brother, married Bharatha and Shatrughna, respectively. As the four daughters-in-law were ideal women, the home of Dasaratha was also an ideal one.

When Vishwamitra took the permission of Dasaratha to take Rama with him for the protection of

the *Yagna*, Lakshmana instantly followed Rama. As they reached the banks of Sarayu led by Vishwamitra, the sage taught them two mantras, “Bala” and “Atibala”, so that they would not suffer from sleeplessness and hunger. “Bala” conquers sleep; “Atibala” conquers hunger. Though Vishwamitra knew that Rama was omnipotent yet he came under the spell of *Maya* and taught him the sacred mantras.

The home of Dasaratha was an ideal one where all the mothers lived in great harmony. The queens of Dasaratha also lived in great unity and understanding. Nowadays it is difficult to lead one’s life with a single wife, what to speak of three wives? But the home of Dasaratha was an exception. Great harmony and understanding prevailed there. One may entertain the thought ‘why Kaikeyi behaved in a selfish manner demanding Rama’s exile for 14 years.’ She was working under the divine dictates, for Rama was committed to go to the forest to kill the demons. People entertain the notion that Manthara poisoned the mind of Kaikeyi by her evil counsel. Kaikeyi was not a lady who would listen to the words of a servant. She was a lady of character, endowed with great virtues. In fact, she loved Rama more than her son Bharatha.

When the Devas and sages approached Brahma with a supplication to save them from the atrocities of Ravana, Brahma told them, “I gave a boon to Ravana

that he would be killed neither by gods nor even by *kinnaras* and *kimpurushas* but I did not mention *Manava* (human). Hence, Ravana would meet his end at the hands of Rama (in a human form), who is an incarnation of Vishnu.” Everything was happening according to the Divine will. Even Lankini gave utterance to the Divine will. When Hanuman hit her, she said, “Bad times are ahead of Lanka.” It was prophesied that when a monkey would hit her, the downfall of Lanka would begin. In fact, when Hanuman hit her, Lankini fell flat on the ground. Lankini was a demoness of enormous strength who was guarding the city of Lanka at the portals of the fortress.

The eagle which took away Sumitra’s pudding bowl, dropped it on the lap of Anjana Devi while she was meditating. Hanuman was also closely connected to Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrughna as he was born to Anjana Devi out of the sacred pudding that the queens of Dasaratha had partaken. Because of this reason Hanuman felt a close link with Lord Rama and played an important role in His mission.

Ramayana is for All and for All Times

Embodiments of Love!

The *Ramayana* stands out as a great ideal to the entire mankind. It sets examples in every field of life. It shows how brothers, sisters and parents should live as ideals. The *Ramayana* is an inspiration not only for

ancient times but also for the modern age. Every man is born in this world to shine as an ideal, not to lead an egocentric life. Every man should stand out as a model to the best of his capacity. The *Ramayana* demonstrates to all how an ideal family should be and what should be ideal manners like.

When Sita, Mandavi, Urmila and Shrutakeerthi were leaving for Ayodhya along with their husbands, their parents did not shed tears of sorrow as parents do now. The parents of these four women thought that their daughters were duty bound to go to the home of Dasaratha. They did not think that they were going to another home. The daughters too did not shed any tears of sorrow. It was with tears of joy that the parents sent their daughters to the home of their husbands. Such were the ideals of the people of those days.

When Lakshmana decided to accompany Rama to the forest, mother Sumitra told him, “My son, it is God’s will that I am your mother and you are my son. We should play our roles according to divine destiny. Don’t feel bad that you are going to the forest. Ayodhya without you is a forest for us and a forest in your company, is Ayodhya.” These were the ideals upheld by the great women of those days.

There are many lessons that the *Ramayana* holds out for the entire world. One day Dasaratha noticed that the child Rama was massaging his own feet. He did not

ask the services of the servants to massage his feet. Dasaratha, looking at Rama's condition, sent for the servants immediately to massage Rama's feet. Rama told Dasaratha, "I don't want the services of these servants. I will do my work myself. These are my legs and not someone else's. So I should massage my own legs without depending on others. All are servants in this world." All are one, be alike to everyone. This was the ideal Rama demonstrated.

Lavanya – the Mark of an Avatar

Rama was full of *lavanya*. *Lavanya* means control of senses. His character was the cause for His *lavanya*. In fact, Rama and Krishna were ever youthful. Have you ever seen a picture of Rama or Krishna sporting grey hair? Have you ever seen a picture of Krishna with signs of old age? Have you ever seen Him as a grandfather? All avatars are ever youthful. This body of mine is approaching its 77th year. I do not know any weakness and I can walk quickly. I avoid doing so because it may look funny and people may laugh if I walk fast at this age. People will definitely laugh if a toddler walks with a walking stick in his hand. It will look funny if an old man plays with toys. Similarly, if I walk fast, the devotees may laugh. We should conduct ourselves according to the time, place and circumstances. I conduct myself according to these. I don't know any weakness. Usually, old people have wrinkles on their faces and they suffer from deafness and cataract. I don't have any

signs of old age. There is not a single wrinkle on my face. My eyes shine like bulbs and my voice is like a loudspeaker. People go for a cataract operation in their old age. My eyes are in perfect condition. I can see anything at a distance. Nobody knows my power and strength. But I use them according to the need and the situation. I use my power discreetly. Speed breakers are meant to control the speed. They are necessary and they ensure safety. Likewise, sometimes I control my power. These are all signs of my Divinity. You will know my Divine glory slowly and steadily in the course of time. Though I have a human body, I am free from human attachment. Though the body is human, I am entirely Divine.

As Rama and Krishna were born with human bodies, people entertained the wrong notion that they died in ordinary way. Rama and Krishna did not shed their bodies in the human way. Rama stepped into river Sarayu and vanished. He had earlier sent Sita away. Similarly, Krishna went to Dwaraka. Uddhava saw Krishna sitting under a tree, and then Krishna suddenly disappeared. The bodies of divine incarnations will not fall in the hands of mortals. You must earn the capacity to understand Divinity.

Embodiments of Love!

Since I eat like you, play with you and sing with you, you are deluded into the belief that I am also a

human being like you. It is sheer ignorance to think of me in that way. Some devotees think that there is something wrong with my legs when I walk slowly. I do not have any trouble with my legs, I am happy and there is nothing wrong with my health. I walk slowly with measured steps because of the robe I wear. The robe I wear is stitched to the very hem preventing me from taking long steps. My walk is slow, gentle and soft, without any roughness. I am all sweetness and softness.

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