

8. The Rama story is ours

THE five basic elements that compose the Universe are cognised by the sense organs in man as sound, touch, form, taste and smell. The response of the person to these impacts can be either pleasure or pain, beneficent or maleficent, for it depends on how and in what spirit they are welcomed and accepted.

Man has three vital tools which can handle these impacts---body, speech and mind--capable of deed, word and thought. The body is essential for every act and achievement. "Man is human because of the body, it is the first requisite for moral living." Man has been blessed with the body in order that he may realise the purpose of life---revering elders, serving parents, and loving God. The body has to be sanctified by the study of scriptural texts and the lives of holy personages; further it is rendered pure and sacred by engaging in the promotion of the happiness of others and earning affection and appreciation of all.

The second tool is speech. This tool has to be sanctified by adhering to truth and love and avoidance of violence. Speech has to be free from harshness and frenzy. It must be soft, soaked in love and pleasing. The words must be so sweet, that the listener desires to hear them more often. He should love to bring them back to memory, in order to relive the joyous moments.

Man has ten *indriyas* to pester him

The third tool is the mind. It requires persistent effort to sanctify the mind. It is named *manah* since it is ever busy with *manana* (recapitulation) of the past, confronting the present and planning for the future. It alternates between likes and dislikes, yes and no. It is carried away by fits of passion or panic. So, it has to be curbed and cured by patient persuasion. Above all, one must prevent it from catering to the greedy senses and thereby losing both health and happiness. The mind is described as the 'husband' (*pathi*) of the senses (*Indriya*). Dasaratha allowed one of his three wives to lead him so far astray that he forfeited his own life. Utthanapada had two wives, their conflict to establish mastery over him cost him his own son, Dhruva, who left him, and later, his life. Man has ten *indriyas* to pester him. If his mind yields to their demands, woe be to him!

Tongue demands, "Bring me tasty delicacies or else, I won't speak to you." Ear demands, "Bring me pleasant music and tell me delightful counsel or else I will stay deaf." So Eye is adamant. She shouts, "Take me to some attractive Exhibition. Show me fine films, Video tapes or T.V. programmes; or else, I will no longer stay in this home!" The poor mind is tormented thus by every sense organ. So the mind gets feeble, faint and stunted.

When controlled, mind becomes a sacred tool

Therefore, the mind must be saved from being enslaved by the senses. The master should never allow himself to be the servant of his servants. The mind has been provided with a master, whom it is neglecting and ignoring, through its degrading subservience to the senses. That master is *Buddhi* (intelligence), the faculty of discrimination. When controlled and directed by this faculty, the mind becomes a sacred tool.

This day, the birth of Sri Rama is celebrated in all lands. Rama had deed, word and thought, body, speech and mind, ever pure and totally free from blemish. Really speaking, one ought to revere the story of Rama as a profound allegory. Every act and actor in that story attracts attention and gets imprinted on the memory because the allegory is personal to each of us. For

example, consider Dasaratha, the Ten Chariot King? He represents the human body with the five senses of perception and the five sense-organs of action. He has three wives---the three *Gun*as or dispositions, *Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*---named Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. He has four sons, who embody in themselves the four goals of human life, *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. Rama is the very embodiment of *Dharma* (Morality, Virtue, Right conduct). The other three goals can be achieved only by steady adherence to *Dharma*. We find, therefore, the brothers Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna following the footsteps of Rama.

Rama had mustered so much spiritual strength through his consistent observance of *Dharma*, that he could wield and bend the mighty bow named *Sivadhanus*. That was the proof of the *Jivi* (the individual) having overcome delusion. Janaka, the Ruler of Videha, had the bow in his custody. He was on the look out for a hero who had mastered the fatal flaw.

Supreme Wisdom cannot co-exist with duality

The story relates that Janaka, the *Videhi*, (ruler of Videha, that is to say, 'without body' or 'body-consciousness') offered his daughter (the awareness of *Brahman*) to Rama. Wedding Sita is another way of saying 'acquiring Supreme Wisdom', for, from where was Sita gained? The story says, 'from a furrow on the Earth', that is to say, from *Prakriti* (Nature). This statement reveals that *Brahma Jnana* can be won by meaningful involvement with *Prakriti*.

The next stage in the career of Rama finds him. in the thick jungle of life. The jungle was infested with attractions and aversions. The Supreme Wisdom cannot co-exist with duality. It insists on the renunciation of both aspects. Rama pursued the golden deer, which Sita longed to possess. *Brahma Jnanam* disappeared as a consequence of this lapse.

Rama (the representative *jivi*) had to undergo many spiritual austerities to regain the Supreme Enlightenment. He reached, according to the story, the Rsyamuka peak, the abode of total detachment. There he secured two allies, Sugriva (Discrimination) and Hanuman (Courage). The alliance was sealed by an act of service from Rama, which indicated his loyalty to *Dharma* under all conditions. He slew Vali, the vicious victim of wickedness. Vali had dethroned his father, forced him-to take refuge in the jungles, associated with Ravana, of evil fame, and ill-treated his brother Sugriva for no reason at all. Vali succumbed so low, because of the company he preferred to be in. He serves as a warning to everyone. Einstein said, "Tell me your company; I can tell you what you are."

Ramayana in real life of every aspirant

Rama installed *Viveka* on the throne of Vali. With his allies, he entered on the quest for the Wisdom that he had lost. He found across his path a wide ocean of *Moha* (delusion). His ally, Hanuman (Courage) had a vision, unclouded by desire or ignorance. His only desire was fixed on the Name of Rama and the Form of Rama. So he was able to leap across the ocean, smooth and safe.

Rama reached the other shore. He slew Ravana (the embodiment of the *Rajasic*, passionate, impulsive, possessive traits) and his brother, Kumbhakarna (the embodiment of the *Tamasic*, the dull, the self-destructive, the lethargic, traits). Rama recovered Sita (*Brahma Jnana*) now confirmed by striving and struggling, and more convincingly precious as a result of constant meditation. And, Rama returned with Her to Ayodhya (the impregnable city, the Source and Spring of Wisdom).

The consummation of the soul's journey is the Coronation, the *Maha Pattabhishekam*.

This is the Ramayana which needs to be gone through, during the life of every aspirant. The heart is the Ayodhya. Dasaratha is the body, the *Gunas* are the consorts, the *Purusharthas* are the sons, Sita is Wisdom. Attempt and attain this Realisation by purifying the three tools--body, speech and mind.

Hanuman's greatness

Hanuman is the brightest example of such a realised soul. When he first presented himself before Rama and offered his services, Rama turned to Lakshmana and said, "Brother! Listen! Notice how Hanuman has mastered the *Vedas*. His speech is saturated with the humility and dedication which the *Rig' Veda* embodies, the retentiveness and reverence that the *Yajur Veda* promotes and the intuitive vision that the *Sama Veda* grants. Hanuman knows all the scriptural texts. He is a genuine devotee. Sugriva is fortunate to have him as his minister, Hanuman, whose thoughts, words and deeds are offered to God." When these three are in perfect harmony, the person wins the Grace of God, as Hanuman succeeded in securing.

Sugriva fumbled in this *Sadhana*. He failed to keep his word. He had not commandeered his forces, though the rainy season had ended. So, Lakshmana vented his anger at his ingratitude and inequity. "You can never cleanse yourselves of the sin of ungratefulness and breach of promise. Your conduct is so reprehensible that even vultures will desist from feeding on your corpse." When the terrified culprit fell at the feet of Rama, seeking pardon, Rama said, "Lakshmana! Safe and happy on his throne, Sugriva is blinded by pride, power and ignorance. Misery alone can open the eyes of people to the values they have neglected. He has been holding on to the trivial and the temporary which intoxicate man with fleeting joys. How can such a person follow the path of *Dharma*?" Hanuman, who heard this compassionate reaction, returned with Sugriva and advised him to repent and reaffirm, his rectitude and thankfulness. One has to recognise one's faults and remedy their consequences by sincere self-examination and repentance.

It is often said that Rama followed *Dharma* at all times. This is not the correct way of describing him. He did not follow *Dharma*; *he was Dharma*. What he thought, spoke and did was *Dharma*, is *Dharma* for ever.

Purify speech by adhering to truth

The recitation of Ramayan verses or listening to the exposition of those verses must transform the person into an embodiment of *Dharma*. His every word, thought and deed must exemplify that ideal. *Sraddha* (steady faith) in Rama, Ramayana and oneself is essential for success. And for what end? To become good and help others to unfold their goodness. To be totally human with every human value expanded to the utmost and promote those traits in society to help others too.

Purify the body by means of holy activity. Purify speech by adhering to truth, love and sympathy. Purify the mind, not yielding to the clamour of the senses and the desires they breed. But, the tragic

truth is that learned people do not accept any moral responsibility now. The world is therefore enveloped in fear, for people whose thoughts, words and deeds are vitiated by inhuman and non-human motives have gained control over science and technology.

The senses supply material to the mind. The mind is a by-product of the ego. The ego is a reflection of the *Atma*. *The Atma* is wave of the *Paramatma*, the Universal Consciousness. Everyone must trace the ego to its spiritual origins and direct his life on the lines of that heritage.

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It is not realised that all the pleasures and comforts enjoyed by one are really delved from society and are not solely got from one's own means. Man does not show any gratitude to the society which has enabled him to enjoy his wealth, position and power. A man lacking gratitude is worse than an animal. He forfeits the grace of God.

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