

RELEVANCE OF RAMAYANA

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INTRODUCTION

The number of literary works available to us in all languages from different societies is infinite. These literary works obviously have dealt with various types of personalities and situations. So, it looks almost impossible to choose a literary work that can be relevant to all people at all times. Fortunately, there are few literary masterpieces that are eternally relevant and useful. Among these few eternal jewels, Ramayana is significant not only as a historical literary masterpiece but also as premier one. Maharishi Valmiki is the premier poet of Ramayana. The various types of situations depicted in Ramayana are very similar to those that commonly occur in our lives. Thus, Ramayana is relevant to all humans. Its reading and understanding gives joy in addition to wisdom. It describes the nine sentiments (rasas) as follows: Love between Sita and Rama; Valor in breaking the Shiva's bow while putting the string; Pathos on Kakasura when he surrendered; Marvel in building the bridge for ocean; Humor when Shoorpanakha approached Rama; Terror and Disgust in the battlefield; Fury while slaying Ravana; Peace in interaction with sages. Sage Narada told Maharishi Valmiki that Ramayana would be eternal as long as rivers, mountains, etc remain as they are in nature. It only shows its eternal relevance. It is our experience even in our times that Ramayana captured the attention of the people through modern communication media. It is said that Ramayana is like a big river that is born out of Valmiki as mountain. This big river is flowing towards the ocean as Rama. Thus while flowing, the big river Ramayana is making the whole world sacred.

RELEVANCE

It is the intent of this brief article to address the question, why Ramayana is relevant to us? In spite of all the global developments in all walks of life, still a challenge remains for human beings. That challenge is at an individual level how to distinguish between Dharma (right) and Adharma (wrong) and then follow Dharma. The reason for the eternal difficulty of this challenge is the complexity in defining Dharma. Here, one needs a reference that is not influenced by any human thought. This reference is Vedas. However, Vedas are not easy to understand and interpret by everyone. It is in this critical need, Ramayana of Valmiki becomes the reference that can be understood and followed by any human being. In the words of yogi-seer Sriranga Sadguru of Karnataka, India, "Maharishi Valmiki has composed this Ramayana from the heights of super-conscious state that is not influenced by the sensory thoughts and ideas. It is not just a historical story that happened once, but is always happening. It can be seen anytime in the inner most levels within oneself by developing the spiritual insight".

Sri Rama is the human manifestation of Dharma. In the fundamental task of knowing Dharma, Rama's life is an illustration and guiding light to follow by any human being. In fact, the word Ramayana is described as two terms Rama and Ayana. It means

that Rama's life is not only the path of illustration but also the goal to achieve by any aspirant. Dharma in the frame work of four-fold objectives (purushArthas) is the guiding principle of actions to fulfill the needs of artha (wealth) and kama (desires). As we all know, in the story of Ramayana, Rama has demonstrated the path of Dharma, for various roles in life such as a son, disciple, brother, husband, hermit, friend, warrior, king, father, etc. In addition, Rama has also shown how to deal with one's enemy. Another important reason for relevance of Rama's life is due to the fact of incarnation of Lord Narayana as a human being. Rama's life is also referred as pure and clean mirror. Everyone in order to cleanse himself or herself, should look into this (Rama) mirror. Based on the true image obtained by Rama mirror, one gets guidance for self-correction. Rama is also referred as an ocean. He is ocean of all the noble qualities, which a human being should aspire for. Everyone can fill in their mind as a container from the ocean as Rama.

Acharya Vedanta Deshika has portrayed relevance of Ramayana to us as: "Ravana as mind with full of arrogance and powers of senses of cognition and action as ten heads has taken control of body (Lanka). This life with human body is surrounded by ocean of worldly life. The jeeva (individual soul) as Sita is entrapped in this body. The acharya as Anjaneya carrying the message of Bhagavan is reaching out to jeeva to bring them (Jeeva and Bhagavan) together and relieve jeeva from the clutches of mind". Also, Acharya Shankara Bhagavatpada has described (in Atmabodha) a sadhaka (yogi) in the light of Rama's life. "Having crossed the worldly ocean of false attachments and killed the demons of desire and hatred, a yogi attains peace and bliss in the form of Sita in the heart" It is inspiring to remember to Sriranga Sadguru's words on Rama, "Rama is human from the viewpoint of gross level (Sthula), is divine from the subtle level (Sookshma) and Supreme Being or light from the causal level". Thus Rama's life pervades all level of consciousness and hence has relevance to all human beings. In Ramayana, all other characters in addition to Rama are relevant and necessary to understand the dharma for following by human beings.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thus, relevance of Rama and Ramayana have to be experienced. A sincere study, understanding and practice of principles in Ramayana provide the spiritual insight required to see the Vedic truths and culture. Let the stories and everlasting principles of Ramayana be transferred from generation to generation as it is relevant to all human beings all the time and everywhere.

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