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Ramayana – The Essence Of The Vedas

Just as Veda Purusha (Virat Purusha) was born as Dasaratha's earthly son, the Vedas were born from Prachetas in the form of The Ramayana.

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Embodiments of Love!

THE *Ramayana* is the very form of the Vedas that have come down to us from the heavens. The Vedas are divided into four parts, namely Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda. Lord Rama is the embodiment of Rig Veda, Lakshmana, the Yajur Veda, Bharata, the Sama Veda and Satrugna, the Atharvana Veda. The four Vedas became the four sons of Dasaratha and played at his palace. The Rig Veda and the Yajur Veda consist of Mantras, which are related to *Yajnas* and *Yagas*. That is the reason why Sage Viswamitra took Rama and Lakshmana along with him to safeguard his *Yajna*. While Rama was in

exile, Bharata left Ayodhya and stayed in a village called Nandigrama, all the time singing the Divine Name of Rama for 14 long years. It is for this reason that Bharata is described as the personification of Sama Veda. It was Satrughna who safeguarded the places of sacred rituals like *Yajnas* and *Yagas* from the invasion of evil spirits and demons. Do not think that *Ramayana* is different from the Vedas. In fact, it is the very essence of the Vedas.

The Inner Significance Of Ramayana

Rama exemplified three kinds of righteous behaviour (*dharma*), namely, the *dharmas* relating to (1) the individual (2) the family and (3) society. To uphold this three-fold *dharma*, Divinity manifested in a triangular flow, in the form of the *Trimurtis* (the Triune form). The *Ramayana* manifested to elaborate the human values. The period of the *Mahabharata* was well over 5000 years ago, and the *Ramayana* was enacted aeons earlier. Even after the passage of countless ages, if it is still occupying the hearts of the people at large, you can well imagine its importance. There are two kinds of messages dominating the *Ramayana*: One pertains to Rama and the other to Ravana.

Sathya (Truth) is the very form of man; *dharma* (righteousness) is the innate propensity. *Sathya* and *dharma* are the two eyes of man. These eyes are the very forms of all the scriptures. Rama's message to humanity was to uphold *dharma* and *sathya*, to stay in

the path of these and fulfill one's life. On the other hand, the two principles of *sathya* and *dharma* were the very opposites of Ravana's propensities. At the point of death, Ravana sent the following message to his people: "Oh my people, do not follow my example. I am the personification of all evil qualities. Falling into excessive desires, I have lost my progeny. Instead of establishing a good name for myself, I have destroyed my entire kingdom. Ultimately, I have ruined myself. Rama achieved universal fame and I have ended up accumulating ill-fame."

Fame and disrepute are cognates. There is no Rama without Ravana or Ravana without Rama. It is the bringing together of Rama and Ravana that is the *Ramayana*. Good and evil are always present side by side. Pitch-black hair surrounds a moon like face. What is the inner significance of this? The shining forth of righteous fame is intensified by the surrounding darkness of evil. It is necessary for you to recognise the inner significance of the events of the *Ramayana*.

The *Ramayana* has very subtle truths embedded in it. The epic first of all expounds the duties of the individual. In the everyday world, any person's form is termed as the individual. The duties of the individual taught by *Ramayana* are not relating to this external form of the individual. The Unmanifest, immanent and hidden human values are the essence of the *Ramayana*.

The inner reality and the divinity resident in the heart constitute the true individuality. Individual does not mean the form; the individual in action is the true individual. Rama was exemplifying such individual values to humanity. To uphold the promise of his father, He went through the inconveniences of forest life, but He did not look on these hardships as hardships. In this way, He upheld His family traditions also. It is well known that the scions of the Ikshvaku family never swerved from their promises. Under any circumstances, upholding the values of one's parents, relations, and wife and children constitutes this three-fold *dharma*. How has Rama done this?

Rama Was The Embodiment Of Dharma

Wearing bark clothes, He came to Kausalya to take leave of her. Kausalya was astonished at the attire of Rama, who was about to be crowned as the emperor. Smilingly Rama told Kausalya.

“Today I have been commanded by My father to become the ruler of the forests. To rule the forests is also part of our family tradition.” As this conversation was in progress, Lakshmana arrived there in a furious state. He said, “Mother, this is not what happened. Father, compelled by the words of Kaikeyi, has caused this situation. I am only waiting for Rama's command. Let Him just give me permission. I will go immediately and destroy Manthara and Kaikeyi and restore

Rama as the king. I am not constrained even by the words of father". Rama rushed up and physically closed Lakshmana's mouth. He said, "Lakshmana, this evil way is not in keeping with our family tradition. Our family tradition is the upholding of *dharma*. We have to uphold the individual and family tradition. Nothing happens in this world without a cause. Father wouldn't give Me such an instruction without proper reason. Please keep your emotions under control."

On hearing Lakshmana's version, Kausalya fainted. Later, she said, "Rama, is it not a son's duty to equally obey father and mother? Do I not bear half of your father's rights? Therefore, You have to fulfill your mother's orders also. So, I shall also come along with You to the forest." Then Rama pleaded to His mother, "Father is highly distressed because of separation from Me. In this condition, it is not proper for you to desert him. You carry half his burdens. It is your duty now to support, sustain and protect him. The duty of a wife is to serve her husband first of all." Sita, who was standing by heard this conversation. She asked Him, "Rama, You seem to be changing words according to persons and place. You have asked me to stay back and look after father and mother, but to Your mother, You are telling that serving the husband is the prime duty of a wife. Is not my husband, my God? Are the norms different for the wife and the mother?" Rama was pleased that Sita understood her duty well.

When Lakshmana used abusive words against Kaikeyi, Rama advised him, “Kaikeyi loves Me even more than Bharata. Such a mother should not be abused like this. *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava* (revere the mother and father as God). This is our family tradition. I am obeying the words of My father implicitly. I respect all My mothers”. In this manner Rama expounded *dharma* to different people appropriate to the circumstances.

Encounter With The Rakshasa Hordes

In the forest, Lakshmana cut off the nose and ears of Surpanakha. She went and complained to Ravana. Then Ravana invaded the forest with a huge army. At that time, Rama called Lakshmana and said, “You have to support Me as per My instructions. I shall go and face this army of Rakshasas alone. You take Sita to a secluded place and keep her concealed in a safe haven.” But Lakshmana refused to accept this. He said, “Is it proper to face this huge horde of *Rakshasas* alone? My duty is not to protect Sita alone. My prime purpose is to serve You. Being Your brother, can I standby and safely preserve my life while You are in grave danger? So, I shall not go leaving You alone”. Rama replied, “In the multiple duties of man, many such situations arise. You have to act according to circumstances without transgressing *dharma*. Are you not aware that I can face alone any number of

opponents singly? Therefore, you only take up the job of protecting Sita.” In such soft words, He mollified Lakshmana and made him agree to stay back and look after Sita. He whispered the secret of the appropriate *dharma* in Lakshmana’s ears. Lakshmana agreed and conducted Sita to a safe place. From their safe haven, Lakshmana and Sita could hear the loud clamour and bright flashes of the fierce battle. It was difficult for Lakshmana to keep his mind tranquil. Sita also, in her anxiety, urged Lakshmana with even abuses to go in help for Rama. “Lakshmana, why are you abandoning your brother? Go to His support,” she insisted. Lakshmana said, “Mother, my prime duty is strict obedience of Rama’s instructions. Rama is capable of winning over all the enemies by Himself. He is omnipotent and omniscient. What is my strength compared to His! I won’t leave you.” He was pacifying her in this way, and waiting. Rama released a thousand-headed weapon against the enemy, and the Rakshasas were all destroyed. When Rama returned, He was happy to see that Sita and Lakshmana were safe and sound.

How was Rama able to destroy the Rakshasa hordes singly? Really Rama is not a single person. He has got many forms. *Sahasra Seersha Purushah Sahasraksha Sahasra Pad...etc.*, (Myriad headed, myriad eyed and myriad footed is the PURUSHA...etc.,)

A mere sight of His presence was enough to

render the Rakshasa horde unconscious.

Sweeter than sugar, tastier than butter, sweeter indeed than the essence of a beehive, constant repetition of this nectarous sweet name makes you taste the very divine Amruta itself. Therefore, contemplate on this sweet name incessantly.

(Telugu Poem)

Lakshmana said to Sita, “It is even possible to count the waves of the ocean, but there are no words to describe the manifold powers of Rama. In Rama, there are transcendental powers that transcend the *Trigunas*. We are mere instruments. Rama is the omnipotent One. It is enough if you merely pronounce the syllable “Rama”.

All Dharmas Are Ordained By Vedas Only

All the *dharmas* (righteous duties) are no different from the *dharmas* contained in the *Vedas*. *Dharma* is frequently defined as a two-way path. One is *pravritti* and the other is *nivritti*. All activities relating to the external world are *pravritti dharmas*. *Pravritti* tells you when you are hungry, “My child eat.” *Nivritti* tells you on the other hand, “Child, merely because you are hungry, don’t eat everything that you get hold of.” *Nivritti* tells you what, when, and how you should eat. *Pravritti* confuses the mind. *Nivritti* purifies the heart. That which pertains to external objects is *Pravritti*; that which concerns internal needs

is *Nivritti*. All the things that you are experiencing through your eyes, ears, mind, etc., are only related to *Pravritti*. *Nivritti* transcends the sense organs such as eyes, ears, etc. Rama taught such a path of *Nivritti*. This is the main theme of the Vedas.

Rama was born as a child of Dasaratha. He was not born from the womb of Kausalya, but actually from the fire of sacrifice. In fact, the Vedas are personified by the *Yajnas* (sacrifice) and Rama is the very personification of *Yajna*. This is not related to objects of nature. The Rama principle transcends the mind and the intellect.

Kaikeyi was in fact fonder of Rama than Bharata, but Manthara intervened. If you start enquiring what the principle is behind actions of Manthara, you will discover that this is also part of the Vedic principle. Once, when the King of the land of Kekaya was hunting, he aimed an arrow and killed a male deer. The female deer went to her mother and said, “Mother, the King of Kekaya has killed my husband. Now, what is my fate?” That mother had the device (*Yantra*) by which dead persons could be revived. So, the mother deer said, “My child, don’t cry, I shall revive your dead husband.” The mother deer went to the King of Kekaya and told him, “O king, It is not a proper action that you have done, killing the husband of my daughter. You should not indulge in such actions that create separation. Just as I am suffering now by the loss of

my son-in-law, you will suffer the loss of your son-in-law. I shall see to it that this event takes place.” That mother deer was born as Manthara and was the cause of the death of Dasaratha and the consequent loss of son-in-law of Kaikeyi’s father. If you look closely into the various events in the *Ramayana*, you will discover several truths that are enshrined in the Vedas.

Vedas, Sastras and *Puranas* are all inter-dependent, indispensable to each other, and should not be studied as independent works. It is not proper to separate them as unconnected works. The so-called scholars apply worldly standards to these works and make all kinds of studies by separating them as different (Such as *Veda, Sastra* and *Purana*).

Good and bad are intricately mixed and it is not possible for anybody to entirely disentangle them. The same kind of connecting and contrasting relationship that exists between a bright face and a crown of black hair exists between good and evil. If Ravana never existed, Rama’s reputation would not have been so popular and widespread amongst people. Ravana was no ordinary person. He had studied all that Rama had, but he did not put any of his knowledge into practice; hence suffered indigestion of knowledge. Whereas, Rama fully put into practice all His study, having digested it properly, and uplifted his people thereby.

There are two kinds of study: Inward looking and outward looking. The stuff that you learn by rote

and disgorge into your answer paper is the outward looking study. On the other hand, taking your studies into your heart, feeling its fullness and experiencing its bliss is the inward looking study. These have been differentiated by the terms: Education and “Educare”. Your aim should be for acquiring “Educare” and not mere education.

Manthara Was Born To Fulfill A Vow

Manthara never forgot her past resolve and therefore decided to poison Kaikeyi’s mind against her natural affection and her duties towards Dasaratha. Outside Kaikeyi’s palace, there was fanfare, trumpeting and joyous noise of some procession. It was actually Dasaratha coming with all his regal paraphernalia to inform Kaikeyi about his decision to crown Rama. The hunchback Manthara looked out of the window to see what the noise was about. The glory of Dasaratha was distasteful to Manthara. As Manthara was coming down, she encountered Kausalya’s servant maid. She was on her way to Kaikeyi to show off all the dress and fineries that Kausalya had given her. Manthara asked her wherefrom she got all this finery. She replied, “Kausalya’s son Rama is going to be crowned as king and in the joy of that news Kausalya has given all of us, her servitors, fine clothes, jewelry, etc.” Manthara was infuriated by this. She was even jealous of the fact that none of it was coming her way also. Even that rankling was persisting in her mind. Immedi-

ately, she went to Kaikeyi and asked her, “Wherefore are you decked out in all these fineries?” Kaikeyi did not pay any attention to Manthara’s words. Manthara went near Kaikeyi and told her, “You simpleton, you are under the false impression that Dasaratha loves you more than anyone else. But it is really deceit. You will see what happens to you in the future. Just listen to me.” So saying Manthara tapped on Kaikeyi’s shoulder. By this mere contact, all the evil seething inside Manthara entered into Kaikeyi. It is very dangerous to cultivate association with anyone with evil habits. Even a little contact can pollute you with their qualities. Kaikeyi who was so fond of Rama till then turned against Him in a moment. Manthara told her, “Remember, you had rendered a lot of help to Dasaratha when he was fighting with Sharadushana. When the retaining peg of the axle tree of Dasaratha’s chariot got loose and the wheel was about to fall off, you put your finger in the place of the lost peg and retained the wheel in place until Dasaratha was able to vanquish his enemy. At that time, Dasaratha, in his joy, granted you two boons and you had told him that you would ask for the same at some future date, and the king had promised you that he would keep up his word. Now is the time for you to ask for the boons. (Bhagawan here mentioned that if husband and wife remained separated for more than thirteen years, their relationship ceased to exist) So, you ask Dasaratha to banish Rama to the forest for

fourteen years and insist on Bharata's coronation immediately. See, Dasaratha is coming. Take off your ornaments; throw them pell-mell on the floor. Get into your Hall of Anger, lie down on the ground like a withered creeper." Kaikeyi followed her advice. The king came, asked where Kaikeyi was, and got no reply. Manthara told him, "Go and see for yourself". Dasaratha was horrified by the sight he saw inside the chamber. He asked gently, "Kaikeyi, why are you acting like this?" There was no reply. Dasaratha exhorted further, "Kaikeyi, this is not an occasion to behave like this. Rama is about to be crowned and this is a very important event in my life. On such a happy occasion, don't put on such a sorry face. Whatever you want, palace or ornaments or anything else, just mention it and it will be yours." Kaikeyi said she did not want any of these things. Then she expressed her demands, as tutored by Manthara. On hearing this, Dasaratha fell unconscious. In a fit of jealousy, Manthara pushed Kaikeyi into this plight. Anyone possessed by the demon of jealousy will not be spared. Dasaratha pleaded, "Why are you afflicted by this fit of jealousy? This will only bring you ill fame." But Kaikeyi stuck to her stand.

Swami keeps telling you, *Tyaja Durjana Sam-sargam* (Leave association with people of evil habits). Don't associate with anyone who is afflicted with

jealousy even at the cost of losing your life.

Rama Upheld Dharma Even In Adversity

Manthara was the personification of jealousy. Her jealousy was so potent as to change Kaikeyi's great motherly love for Rama. Any amount of persuasion from Dasaratha was fruitless. Just then Rama entered, all dressed-up ready for coronation, to pay His respect to His parents. Looking at the situation there, He asked Kaikeyi, "Amma, what is the problem?" Kaikeyi did not reply, but Manthara told Him about Kaikeyi's boons. She told Him, "Your father promised that day, but is now going back on his promise". After hearing everything, Rama told Kaikeyi, "Mother, I shall uphold the words of father. One should never go back on promises. Such an act will bring great dishonour on the Ikshvaku clan. So, I shall depart for the forest immediately." At once, Manthara came in with bark clothes for Rama to wear. Jealousy is so ready when it decides to act. Rama changed His clothes right there. Rama saluted His father, but Dasaratha was unaware of all that was happening. Kaikeyi then told Him, "Rama, do you look on Your father and mother differently? As a mother, I am telling You to go to the forest straightaway." Rama complied without demur.

Jealousy Is The Root Cause Of All Evils

The *Ramayana* gives examples of Ravana and Manthara as both had evil propensities in them. Rava-

na was slain in the battle, but Manthara is alive even today in the form of jealousy. There is none who can destroy this 'Manthara'. We have to ignore this 'Manthara' and carry on with our duties. When Lakshmana wanted to kill her, Rama stopped him, saying, "One should not kill a woman." Jealousy is the worst of all evil qualities. Three-fourths of the world is ruined because of jealousy. Jealousy has no limits whatsoever. People are jealous of others' prosperity, beauty and education, and try to cause their downfall. One should not speak bad words, listen to bad things and indulge in evil activities. This is the main teaching of *Ramayana*. Manthara indulged in evil talk and Kaikeyi paid heed to her. What happened to them ultimately? They were put to disrepute. Today, do you find any woman bearing the name of Kaikeyi or Manthara? You come across women having the name Kausalya, but not Kaikeyi or Manthara. Keechaka cast evil looks on Draupadi, and consequently met his doom at the hands of Bhima. Do you find anybody having the name Keechaka? None. All those who indulge in evil talk and evil actions should be banished from this world. The *Ramayana* shows us the way to lead an ideal life. That is why people of all countries and all languages hold the *Ramayana* in high esteem. This sacred epic is ever new and ever inspiring. Its glory has not diminished even a bit with the passage of time. It has stood the test of time because of the sacred

ideals it stands for.

Divine Will Is Supreme

Once Anjana Devi, mother of Anjaneya, visited Kausalya at her residence. Kausalya enquired who she was. Anjana Devi introduced herself saying, “I am the mother of Anjaneya, who could cross over the mighty ocean in a leap”. After some time, the mother of Sage Agastya also came there. On being asked, she introduced herself saying, “I am the mother of the one who swallowed the entire ocean in one gulp.” Then Kausalya said to them, “Your sons could accomplish such stupendous tasks because of the mighty power of my son, Rama’s name.” As they were conversing, Rama appeared there and asked, “Mother, what is it that you are discussing?” Kausalya replied, “Son, we are discussing the glory of Your name.” Then Rama said, “Mother, it is not because of My name, but because of My Will that they were able to perform such mighty tasks. There are many who chant My name, but are all of them able to reap its benefit? Purity of heart is very essential.”

The one with noble qualities of purity, patience and perseverance is verily God. Have the determination to uphold good and remain peaceful in the face of adversities. Don’t aspire for name and fame. Keep your heart sacred. Have strong determination to do good. This is the *sadhana* you are supposed to do.

Describing the greatness and grandeur of Rama's Divine power, Thyagaraja composed a beautiful song, "Oh Rama, without Your Divine power, would a mere monkey cross the ocean? Would Lakshmana worship you! Would Lakshmi Devi, the goddess of wealth, become Your consort? Would the intelligent Bharata be subservient to You? Words are inadequate to describe Your Divine Power."

People have been celebrating Rama's birthday for the past thousands of years, but are not able to give up their evil tendencies. Celebration of any festival becomes meaningful only when there is transformation in your heart.

Students!

You are young and have a long way to go. Society is like a train and all elders are bound to get down soon, but you have yet to travel a long way. So, keep your 'compartment' clean and have a comfortable journey. Keep your goal in mind and be the recipients of Divine grace. Chant the Name of Rama wholeheartedly. Install Him in your heart and sanctify your lives. Rama is present in every heart in the form of the Atma. That is why, He is known as Atma Rama. Atma is changeless and that is your true form. Develop the faith that you are Brahma (*Aham Brahmasmi*).

Embodiments of Love!

As you are aware, Prasanthi Nilayam is a part of Rayalaseema region, which is known for its hot summer. Though you are very happy here, your body may not be able to bear this summer heat. It is but natural in this season. So, those who wish to go may do so. No one needs to wait for Swami's permission. Go happily and come back happily in the month of June.

Rama Navami, 2.4.2001, Prasanthi Nilayam