

INDIAN VALUE SYSTEM AND ETHICS: DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INTROSPECTION AND RETROSPECTION WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ITIHASA RAMAYANA

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ABSTRACT

The quintessence in the evolution of the human and humane is in the ability of its learning, observing and introspecting the ethics and values. Ethics and values denote something's degree of importance with the aim of determining what action is the best to live or to do or at least attempt to describe the value of different actions. The fundamentals of living are being learnt on none other than through the acquisition of language, and the widely developed literature universally. The introspection of the self and the retrospection only always create room for further development in any dimension in general and in ethical point of view in particular.

The development of the universal culture solely depends up on the development of the language. This paper focuses on the how each and every stage of the evolution process is governed by the ethical values with a special reference to origination and sustenance of the Indian culture. For Indian life style, philosophy and for the nurturing of ethical values, the epics like *Ramayana*, *Bhaaratha* and *Bhaagavatha* and various forms of literature like *Upanishads*, *Aaranyakas* have laid the corner stone, and given the continuous renaissance through their language with a splendid stature and enriched with affluent literature.

This paper throws light on the systematic and conceptual analysis on the ethics and values through introspection and retrospection in the Indian literature and Indian culture with an underlying observation on the chronological impact on the value enrichment.

KEYWORDS: Ethics and Values, Indian Values, Introspection and Development

INTRODUCTION

Live your character at any cost, at all costs.....

The very widely discussed issue all over the world is the inclination of ethical values and morals. It is being perceived by most of the intellectual and spiritual masters that the culture is slipping into red with a quick evasion of the standards as suggested by our ancestors. It is the need of the hour to introspect ourselves and retrospect the globe around with a deep analysis to know about the rich heritage of humane of the world in general and of India in specific. To the credit of our nation we do have lot of guiding literature to us from ages back to thousands of years and that provides the rays of light for each and every walk of our life. The introspection and retrospection can be done by even by an average intelligent person or even a lay man by going through the Ithihasas and epics. Now in this paper it is proposed to take the Holy Ithihasa for Hindus Ramayana, authored by Maharshi Valmiki, as the reference study. Each and every character of

Ramayana depicts numerous characters which we could find in our every day life. The qualities, the acts, the thought processes and responses to various situations by all these characters teaches us some significant value that must be followed in our day to day life. This paper suggests the ways of human development through sane mind by following the ethics and values suggested by the Indian literature and heritage. Even though the study is confined to a few main characters of Ramayana, this paper attempts to focus and elaborates the way of introspection and retrospection of life through this wealthy literature.

Ramayana- its Prominence

Ramayana is one of the greatest epics of the world and has a special place in Indian culture as well as Sanskrit literature. It's not a history or biography, a part of Hindu mythology. It's highly valued for its contribution to human values for centuries and has a universal relevance. It consist of 24,000 verses in seven kandas namely Bala Kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kishkinda Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Yuddha Kanda followed by Uttara Kanda. Each kanda is sub divided into Sargas (sections) and each Sarga is composed of few slokas (verses).

Ramayana- Ethics and Values

Ramayana happened in the age of Treta Yuga, where the Satya, Dharma, standards and morals are followed very well by all. All of the people who followed Hinduism strongly believed that the character of Rama was the incarnation of God upon the earth planet because righteousness decays and unrighteousness prevails wildly, God incarnates Himself to vindicate the superiority of righteousness. In Dwapara Yuga god incarnated Himself as Lord Krishna. So, Rama in Ramayana of Treta yuga was also the incarnation of God. But the specific difference here is when we compare the God's incarnation of Treta yuga and other yugas – in Dwapara yuga Lord Krishna declared Himself as God at every stage of his behaviour and his way of solving problems does not appear to be of a human. But in Ramayana, the main character Rama's life in early stage from his birth to the last represented the human life like a common man he suffered, faced conflicts and problems as a son, as a husband and as a brother. In all stages Rama performed his responsibilities in a very well manner. He is ideal for all ages. He has with all the good qualities. At first Valmiki asked the sage Narada a question.

“Is there any one in this world at present who is full of virtues and at the same time in possession of great powers, who knows what is right, is well versed in Dharma, who is conscious of service done (greatful), truthful and firm resolve? Who is possessed of right conduct and who is friendly to all living beings? Who is man of knowledge, who is powerful and who has a singularly lovable appearance? Who has subdued his life? Who has conquered anger? Who is possessed of splendour and who is above fault finding?” (From Ramayanaread.com)

Then the sage Narada immediately replied for all these questions with a single answer i.e, Rama. That's the greatness of Rama. It's the story we live at every moment of our life. Thus the story of Ramayana whenever read gives turmoil and we get the enlightenment.

Contemporary World and its Practices

In the present globalization everything is in the aspect of business. Our education system, employment, our life from birth to death is completely expecting or seeking for something related to worldly mundane items. Most of the people are dissatisfied with their teams, with their professions, with their people and at last with themselves. In order to fulfil their wishes and reach their desired destinations they never bother about moral and ethical values. They are very much interested in Machiavelli's way of achieving things. That's why the cultural heritage and the moral standards are decreased day by day.

In this type of present confused conflict state when we recollect and remember the dynasty of Rama and his life, we can understand how we demoralized ourselves for our needs, how we ruin our human relations for our temporary results, how we destroy our value based strengths and moral standards for our easy way of going life are clearly visualised before our eyes.

Our life is chased between materialism (Artha) and sense of pleasure (Kama). In the process of this chasing we never think about Dharma in every stage. In Ramayana every character is symbolised with clarity and proximately to common man's life. Whatever the situations faced at present, whatever the incidents happened, whatever the thoughts flashing our minds are all there in that holy Ithihasa of Ramayana.

When we consider a person as good or bad, right or wrong while his/her deeds which depend on their way of brought up, their education, behaviour, values given by them to their lives, the society in their point of view and their way of maintaining relations.

Ramayana- Study of its Characters

For all these above aspects, we just need to revise Ramayana, then we can easily understand the way to maintain good relations and to achieve our goals. Not only the main character of Rama but also the other characters prescribed the dos and don'ts to the human society. And some other characters are the best examples which are under the influenced of negative shades and human limitations viz, grief, envy, jealous, identity crisis, want of power, imbalances and lack of morality.

Without the close observation of some characters in Ramayana like Mandhara, Kaika, Surpanakha, Tara, Sugreeva, Ravana, Kumbhakarna, Hanuma, Jambavantha, we can not get any useful message to our daily lives. *When we read Ramayana as an epic, as a story of Rama and Sita or we felt as they are the God and Goddess there is nothing to learn from that.* So always, consider it as a representation our lives with the characters of Ramayana.

Three women characters which lead to Ramayana from one stage to another. Those are of Mandhara, Kaika and Surpanaka. Mandhara worked as servant to Kaika in her royal palace. She is very close to Kaika since her childhood. With that lenience, she dominated Kaika through her evil ideas; one among them was to send Rama to forest. This character is the best example for some people of the society who try to spoil the lives of others.

The next one is Kaika, she is one of the queens of Dasaradha along with Kousalya and Sumitra. As a queen she is completely aware of royal traditions and culture. She is very wise and courageous. Once in a war she rescued King Dasaradha even such a wise woman yielded by the evil influence of Mandhara and decided to send Rama to forest, even though she knows its quite against the royal customs and traditions. These two women lead the story of Ramayana from Ayodhya to forest.

Surpanaka a very close relative of demon king Ravana. On be half of Ravana she performs her duty of destruction of the holy ashram atmosphere, creates obstacles for Yajnas. She was fascinated when she saw Rama and tried to get him as her husband. But it was impossible then she reported Ravana against Rama and created enmity on him. This character lead Ramayana from forest to Lanka and to battlefield.

Everyone can observe three women characters in everyday life.

Another important women character is Tara, wife of Vali and later wife of Sugreeva, kings of Vanaras. She is very clever and she is familiar with administrative affairs. First she spent her life with Vali, the King of Kishkindha. When Vali went into a cave to fight with somebody and continued it a lot many days inside the cave. In his absence Sugreeva ruled the

kingdom and Tara started spending her life with Sugreva by misperceiving that Vali might have been dead. But again Vali came back she immediately associate herself with Vali by leaving Sugreva. Later after the death of Vali she again started playing the role of wife to Sugreva. This character Tara resembles some female population of present day society. Some women have been are with infidelity with a diminishing values and standards for the purpose of money, power, identity and ecstasy.

The two important women characters that replicate the goodness of femininity are Sita and Mandodari. The great poet Valmiki described Ramayana as Sita's Charit (story). That is the paramount importance of Sita in Ramayana. She is ideal for all Indians even after the change of the Yugas. Every women could learn about marital relation from her life by observing how she behaves as a daughter of Janaka, as a wife of Rama and as a daughter-in-law of Dasaradha. She never violated the Dharma's of a loyal wife and never expected anything from Rama except his presence forever. She gave wonderful advises even when they are exile period. Their marital relation is ideal to entire humanity. They never differed in their opinion on any matter. That is the uniqueness of the wedding bond proposed by the ancestors. She has the wonderful feature of equanimity. She welcomed the proposal of Dasaradha of declaration of Rama the prince. She also welcomed with the same spirit of the Rama's Vanavas. She never bothered about her life in forest and never complained about this to Rama. She never differentiate her way of life in royal palace as daughter of the emperor and in the forest as a common woman. Sita's character is a well known ideal to all of us.

The remaining important woman character is Mandodari. She is the wife of King Ravana. She never behaved reluctant to follow the Dharmas proposed to a wife according to Vedas even though her husband Ravana doesn't have any morals. But at the same time she never supported for the activities done by him. The unfortunate thing is that no one could remember this character and no one could think of as an ideal only because of the wifeship to a cruel man.

In present day society these types of women are also there who are unsung heroines. Because of their own life partners. The character of Rama is the embodiment of Dharma. As a child Rama inculcated all the Dharmas under the training of the great sage Viswamitra. He never behaved as he is the son of an emperor and he always gave respect to elders and women in their royal fort as well as in the society. The character Rama in Ramayana stands for dignity and respect to his father's words. Only because of that he welcomed his Vanavasa. He has the ennobling influence of great Dharmas proposed by our ancestors through his deeds.

Rama always ready to forgive (kshama), even his enemies also. He renounced (Tyaga) his kingdom to stick on to his father's words. He showed his gratitude (Kriajnata) to Sugreva and others. He was with the purity of mind, that's why he forgiven Kaika. He showed his courage, a good number of times from his childhood to the battle field with Ravana. We can also observe the qualities of protection of the individuals (Rakshan), truthfulness (Satyam), charity (danam) and worship of the guest (Aathideyam). In all ages from Kruta Yuga to Kali yuga we couldn't find such a character like Rama. He is the one and only unique character who represents our culture and Dharma forever.

A very significant and notable character in Ramayana is Hanuma. He is with all the features of a perfect knight and at the same time a loyal follower to his master. When Rama was in a grief because of Sita's entangle in Ravana's court. Hanuma found her with his unprecedented warrior capability and made Rama to feel relaxed. He knows how to bring a person out of sorrow by assuring his support and infusing the mind with courage as what he did exactly in Lanka when he saw Sita. He continued to be a very closely associated sub ordinate to his master Rama irrespective of the situation in as a personification to loyalty. It teaches the mankind how to be with sincerity and efficiency in the condition of crisis.

The character of Lakshmana as the beloved brother of Rama stands for its familial intimacies and affections. When Rama was asked to leave for Vanavasa (forest) with no second thought even by sacrificing the joyful life in the palace. Lakshmana had immediately decided to follow Rama and has given a great value to the brotherliness. From the childhood onwards Rama and Lakshmana do not exist one without the other. The same amount of love had been reciprocated by Rama towards Lakshmana. The association of these two characters is a guiding line for all the siblings as prescribed by Ramayana.

The King Ravana replicates the negative shades of human and exemplary what not to be done by a man. This character tells the ultimate punishments that would be conferred to the unethical behaviour in the society. *It also tells calibre, intelligence, high level of knowledge, the wealth and his super natural powers all are just merely useless if values and morals are missing in the life.*

CONCLUSIONS

All the above observations can make us to arrive at taking a birds eye-view at the society through the Ithihasa of Ramayana which has universal applicability all the times. An introspection of self as well as a retrospection of the world around is possible by keenly following Ramayana and knowing about the quintessence of it. The culture has given everything that is needed for us, our ancestors with a great vision have textured Ithihasa, so as to make us acquainted with morals and ethics. Going through these, referring them with an insight and analysis through Introspection by taking them as metaphors of our life is richly beneficial to keep up our spiritual lead and well being forever.

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