

Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa and Subāṣitas

(Words of Wisdom)

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1. Introduction

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the great philosopher and Sanskrit Scholar (and one of our past presidents) stated that “Civilisation is a way of life, a form of society and a condition of human relationships.” The Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa brings out in a lucid manner, the cultured interaction between father and son, husband and wife, friends and foes. While depicting various situations, Vālmiki brings out, through his characters, the relevant subbāshitas as the situations warrants.

2. ‘Pitru vākya paripālana’ (Honoring father’s word)

Complying with implicitly the wishes of his father and honoring his words is considered as great virtue in a son in Indian culture. Kaikeyi says to Rama that his father had agreed to grant the two boons given to her long time ago, one of which is Rāma’s exile to the forests for 14 years. Rāma replies to her that there is no higher duty to perform for a son than serving one’s father and carrying out his words.

न ह्यतो धर्मचरणं किञ्चिदस्ति मदत्तरम् ।
यथा पितरि शुश्रूषा तस्य वा वचनक्रिया ॥

When his mother Kausalya was lamenting piteously on the impending departure of Rama to the forests, Rama, the righteous minded, comforts her saying that no one suffers because of his carrying out his father’s mandate.

तदेतत्तु मया कार्यं क्रियते भुवि नान्यथा ।
पितुर्हि वचनं कुर्वन्न कश्चिन्नाम हीयते ॥

To Lakshmana who was fuming with anger at the prospect of Rāma going to forest, Rāma says that

“dharma indeed is supreme in the world. In dharma is truth rooted and his father’s command based on dharma is supreme.”

धर्मो हि परमो लोके धर्मे सत्यं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
धर्मसंश्रितमेतच्च पितुर्वचनमुत्तमम् ॥

3. Destiny

Rāma patiently explains to an agitated Lakṣmaṇa that no man can fight Destiny as pleasure and pain, fear and anger, profit and loss, birth and deliverance, indeed whatever happens is the work of Providence. He further says that things which comes out by chance even when unintended and also that which has been produced with out proper effort is the work of Destiny.

सुखदुःखे भयक्रोधौ लाभालाभौ भवाभवौ ।
यच्च किञ्चित्ताभूतं ननु दैवस्य मर्म तत् ॥
असङ्कल्पितमेवेह यदकस्मात् प्रवर्तते ।
निवर्त्यारम्भमारब्धं ननु दैवस्य कर्म तत् ॥

4. The duty of a wife

As Rāma was firm in his resolve to go to forest, Kausalya asks him to take her also to the forest as it was not possible for her to live in Ayodya amidst the other two wives of Daśaratha. At this juncture Rāma tells her to be in Ayodya to take care of Daśaratha, her husband. He tells that “To a woman, her husband is indeed her god and her lord as long as he lives.

जीवन्त्या हि स्त्रिया भर्ता दैवतं प्रभुवेव च ।
भवत्या मम चैवाद्य राजा प्रभवति प्रभुः ॥

He further says that a woman may be noblest of all women who is devoted to vows and fasting. Nevertheless, if she does not look after husband, she will reap the fruits of sin. On the other hand, even if a

woman has never been revertial to gods and has ceased worshipping them, she will obtain the highest bliss by serving her husband. He further adds that a woman should give herself solely to the service of her husband, taking delight in doing his pleasure and his good. He points out that what has been said by him (about the role of a wife) is the path of dharma, known for long years, revealed in the Vedas and is the practice followed by the ancients.

व्रतोपवासनिरता या नारी परमोत्तमा ।
 भर्तारं नानुवर्तेत सा तु पापगतिर्भवेत् ॥
 भर्तुः शुश्रूषया नारी लभते स्वर्गमुत्तमम् ।
 अपि या निर्नमस्कारा निवृत्ता देवपूजनात् ॥
 शुश्रूषामेव कुर्वीत भर्तुः प्रियहिते रता ।
 एष धर्मः पुरा दृष्टो लोके वेदे श्रुतः स्मृतः ॥

5. The impermanence of human relationships.

Bharata beseeches Rāma to return to Ayodhya and rule over the kingdom. Rāma while explaining to Bharata as to why it is essential to carry out their late father's wishes, points out that the no man is a master of himself as the unseen hand of destiny drags all of us to our fate. Even as two logs of wood come together on the high sea (by chance), and having been together for some time drift apart, so wives and sons, kin and wealth, come to one only to disappear....: what is certain about them is their eventual loss.

यथा काष्ठं च काष्ठं च समेयातां महार्णवि ।
 समेत्य च व्यपेयातां कालमासाद्य कञ्चन ॥
 एवं भार्याश्च पुत्राश्च ज्ञातयश्च वसूनि च ।
 समेत्य व्यवधान्ति ध्रुवो ह्येषां विनाभावः ॥

6. Highways to heaven

Jābāli, (the great Brāhmaṇa) advises Rāma to take a rationalist view of things and return from the forest. This angers Rāma who speaks in reprobation of his words pointing out that Jābāli has fallen away from the path of Dharma. Rāma

says that gods have described truth, Dharma, valour, compassion, kind speech, the honouring of the Brāhmaṇas, the gods and the guests, as the various highways to heaven.

सत्यं च धर्मं च पराक्रमं च भूतानुकम्पां प्रियवादितां च ।
 द्विजातिदेवातिथिपूजनं च पन्थानमाहुस्त्रिदिवस्य सन्तः ॥

He further adds that all men honour those great sages who are devoted to Dharma, with whom the wise associate, who are with the power of austerities and are noted for their generosity: who are wedded to non-violence and are free from sin.

धर्मे रताः सत्पुरुषैस्समेतास्तेजस्विनो दानगुणप्रधानाः ।
 अहिंसका वीतमलाश्च लोके भवन्ति पूज्या मुनयः प्रधानाः ॥

7. The three preceptors to a man

Vasiṣṭa also tries to persuade Rāma to return to Ayodhya with words that are rooted in Dharma. He says that every man born in this world has three mentors viz., his preceptor, his father and his mother. The father brings him into the world. The preceptor brings him enlightenment, hence he is called Guru. He tells that he was preceptor to Rāma and also to his father. He concludes that by complying with the his words advising him, as his preceptor, to return to Ayodhya, he (Rāma) will not transgress the ways of the good.

पुरुषस्येह जातस्य भवन्ति गुरुवस्त्रयः ।
 आचार्यश्चैव काकुत्स्थ पिता माता च राघव ॥
 पिता ह्येनं जनयति पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।
 प्रज्ञां ददाति चाचार्यस्तस्मात् स गुरुरुचयते ॥
 सोऽहं ते पितुराचार्यस्तव चैव परन्तप ।
 मम त्वं वचनं कुर्वन् नातिवर्तेः सतां गतिम् ॥

8. Righteous Conduct

While in forest Rāma assures the peace-loving ascetics that he will kill the cruel rakshsas who are the disturbing their austerities and killing them also. At that time, Sita feels that it would be no proper

for Rāma to kill the Rākṣasas as it would amount infliction of cruelty in the absence of any personal enmity to them. Hence, she gently tells him that in this world the great path of righteousness is attainable only through a very straight line of conduct. However, it is attainable by one who abstain from all evils begotten of desire.

अयं धर्मः सुसूक्ष्मेण विधिना प्राप्यते महान् ।
निवृत्तेन तु शक्योऽयं व्यसनात् कामजादिह ॥

She then proceeds to mention the three evils, born out of passion, exits (in this world). Uttering a falsehood is the first evil. The two others, which are more heinous, are intercourse with another man's wife and the infliction of cruelty in the absence of enmity.

त्रीण्येव व्यसनान्यत्र कामजानि भवन्त्युत ।
मिथ्यावाक्यं परमकं तस्माद्गुरुतरावुभौ ।
परदाराभिगमनं विना वैरं च रौद्रता ॥

She then tells Rāma that while the first two evils have not and will not happen in his case, the third evil will happen when he, unprovoked, starts killing the Rākṣasas with whom he has no enmity. She then tells Rāma that wielding weapons as a Kṣatriya is incompatible to the practice of penance in a forest. She further adds that “out of righteousness spring wealth and happiness. Through righteousness one obtains everything. This world has righteousness as its essence.

धर्मादर्थः प्रभवति धर्मात् प्रभवते सुखम् ।
धर्मेण लभते सर्वं धर्मसारमिदं जगत् ॥

9. The rarity of sound advice

Rāvaṇa request Marīcha, who is a master of expedients and skilled in all forms of deceit (maya), his help in carrying out the plan to abduct Sita from Janasthāna. Marīcha, who knows the valour of Rāma, tries his best to dissuade Rāvaṇa from going

ahead with his ill-conceived plot. To convince Rāvaṇa about his sincerity in giving him proper advice, he says ‘O! king, common indeed are persons who always speak that which is pleasing : but rare indeed is one who will speak that which is not pleasing, but good and rare too is one who will hear it.’

सुलभाः पुरुषा राजन् सततं प्रियवादिनः ।
अप्रियस्य तु पथ्यस्य वक्ता श्रोता च दुर्लभः ॥

10. The power of hope

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in their search in the forest for Sita reach the shores of the beautiful Pampa lake. Rāma becomes highly depressed at the prospect of no finding Sita at all and returning back to Ayodya and meeting his mother Kausalya, and others without Sita on their return from forest. Rāma thus laments like a person without hope. Lakṣmaṇa requests Rāma not to give way to grief and the hope of finding Sita. He says “O noble one, hope is indeed is mighty. There is no power which is mightier than hope. To one possessed of hope, there is nothing unattainable in this world. People possessed of hope do not lose heart in deeds. Relying on hope alone, we shall certainly retrieve Sita.”

उत्साहो बलवानार्यं नास्त्युत्साहात् परं बलम् ।
सोत्साहस्यास्ति लोकेऽस्मिन् न किञ्चिदपि दुर्लभम् ॥
उत्साहवन्तः पुरुषा नावसीदन्ति कर्मसु ।
उत्साहमात्रमाश्रित्य सीतां प्रतिलभेमहि ॥

Rāmāyaṇa is an encyclopaedia by its nature. It is a treasure House of Subhāṣitas. It is difficult to exhaust. We simply admire and salute with humanity.

वाल्मीकेर्वदनं सुभाषितं भूयिष्ठम्
तस्मै नायक्य रामाय च नमः



Hindu ideal of marriage- A message from Ramayana

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Hindu ideal of marriage partnership is represented in the model of the words 'Rama – Sita'. 'saha-dharma chaara' is the Sanskrit word expressing this ideal of spouse relation ship. The goal intended to be attained through this ideal is mutual progress on the path of Dharma, in a partnered and cared way. The success of this partnership is measured with reference to Dharma. Though Hindu traditions have many family gods like Shiva-Parvati, Vishnu-Lakshmi, Indra-Shachi, Krishna –Rukmani, the role model of Rama-Sita has been of greater appeal to the Hindu society.

The ideal of 'saha-dharma-chaara' can be translated as couples made for each other through passion of penance. The Sanskrit expression 'paraspara tapah sampat phalaayita parasparau' is an explanation of this concept. The following passage used in traditional Hindu marriage from Valmiki's Ramayana drives home this point. iyam sita mama suta, sahadharmacharee tava-'This daughter of mine, Sita, shall henceforth be your life partner for loving care and mutual progress in togetherness on the path of Dharma, measured with reference to the vales of Dharma'. This concept gives guidelines about the responsibilities of parent of the bride, parent of the groom, relatives, and religious priests officiating for the Hindu Marriage.

The context for this line in Ramayana for is the marriage of Sita. The story line is goes thus: King Janaka, the foster father of princess Sita has set the challenge of lifting Shiva's great bow as a condition to win the hand of Sita. Many kings desiring Sita's hand failed to meet this challenge. Sri Rama succeeds in this test. The message is sent to Dasharatha, father of Rama. The parents of bride and groom Janka and Dasharatha, endorse the marriage. The spiritual masters Vasishtha, Vishwamtira, known for their power of

penance and other great sages approve of the marriage and are ready to bless this 'braamha' type of marriage ritual. King Janaka is handing over bride Sita to the groom Sri Rama. Rajarshi Janka, the spiritually enlightened king says: This daughter of mine, shall henceforth be thy partner in life, in the path of Dharma. For this type of 'bramha' marriage to succeed, the bride and groom should be 'made for each other by penance'.

Kalidasa, the great poet in Sanskrit literature, in his great work 'Kumara Sambhava' describes the marriage of Shiava with parvati on similar lines. Lord Shiva rejects parvati's claim in the first phase of her efforts in winning the hand of Shiva, as her stake was based on her pride of excellence in physical beauty (sarvopamaa drvya samucchayena saa nirmitaa viswasrujaa.). Dejected by this rejection, parvati takes on to penance. Shiva tests the strength of parvati's determination and ultimately accepts her love. The words used by Shiva reads 'kreetah tapobhih' – I am won over by the power of your penance. What physical beauty failed to achieve was made possible by the power of penance. This marriage resulted in the birth of the great warrior Shanmukha Shivakumara for leading the army of gods and the destruction of the demon Taraka. This god, known as Murugan is worshipped by countless devotees for centuries. These gods have a message for the family way and saintly ways. In both paths the common value is Dharma through tapas. Another name for tapas is Yoga and bhakti, prema.

At a later period, another great poet-philosopher – devotee, separated by Kalidas by at least one thousand years, describes the family ways of Shiva and parvati in the following words "paraspara tapahsampat phalaayita parasparu, prapancha maataa pitaru praanchau jayaa-patee

stumah' - We salute the primordial Couple, who were made for each other through penance, desiring for each other as the goal. They are the parent of the world. They are the other half of each other, the spouse." This prayer resonates the words of Kalidas jagatah pitaru vande in Raghuvamsha (1-1) . The value honored in hindu marriage is presented here as 'togetherness' and 'penance' where dharma is the value. This is the word used in the vedic marriage ritual. The sacred text of marriage ritual reads as follows: This marriage partnership is for 'dharma prajaa siddhyartham' for the achievement of dharma and noble issues who observe Dharma. This can be achieved only if each of the partners of marriage have performed passionate tapas penance which transcends the bodily attraction and mental feel of just likes and dislikes, which are disturbed by speech. The vulnerability of attractions limited by physical beauty (body), emotions (mind) and speech can only be overcome through penance aimed at Dharma. This needs guidance and grooming in society.

The parents, instructors, society and state have a responsibility to instill and maintain these values in the younger generation. The places for installing these values in the young and adolescent minds are the families, society, schools and the media of entertainment. These are precisely the places where the corruption and downfall starts to degrade the minds of the next generation, leading to the lament of elders of the previous generation. The issues of values, ethics and cultures are integral issues of importance to the nations at this point. This is where religious values are critical in providing the national identity, religious identity, cultural ethos, and moral standards of behavior.

In this light let us see how other world religions look at the marriage vows.

Marriage Vows are taken during a public or formal occasion so that the couple can declare their commitment to one another before witnesses and so solemnize their marriage union. Marriage

vows are promises made by the couple to one another which declare in a formal manner the deep feelings they have for one another and the desire they have to have their relationship recognized in a ceremony, which gives them the opportunity to express their love through the words of marriage vows. Marriage vows are 'solemnized' by official ceremonies such as a church marriage service, or a civil service. These ceremonies act as official occasions, recognized by state statutory authorities to provide the couple with a legally recognized marriage relationship.

One version of the catholic Christian wedding vow reads as follows. The marriage vow is administered by the officiating priest before the signature is affixed in the records, the ring is exchanged and marriage is officiated. Peter and Catherine are the names of groom and bride.

"(Peter) do you take (Catherine) to be your wife? Do you promise to be true to her in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love her and honor her all the days of your ,life?" . "I do."

Marriage Declaration Minister says: "In as much as you have each pledged to the other your lifelong commitment; love and devotion, I now pronounce you husband and wife, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

In that vow groom has take on, before God and the community, an infinite obligation is built in. In that vow there is no listing of this or that right, no limitation. In that vow groom leaves behind all of personal rights in favor of something much bigger. In that vow groom is granting this new entry in to his life in the relation of wife, a new woman, a different gender from his own, and an unconditional claim on his LIFE; by mind, by body, by spirit. Similarly, the bride when she repeats and agrees for the same vow the obligations is forged. Marriage is fused.

Marriage is an exchange. Both man and the woman promise to abandon the 'small self' to make room for that unconditional claim. Each one has to think before marriage - could I possibly be worthy of such a promise? Did I have a right to expect or demand his/her life in exchange for mine? This is another way of expressing the ideal of hindu vedic marriage of 'paraspara tapah sampat phalaayita parasparu'.

That's why the modern debate over rights makes little or no sense in the context of Catholic marriage and Hindu marriage. We have, each of us, man and woman, in Catholic and Hindu marriages given up our individual rights permanently. If we, as husbands and wives, fulfill our obligations we will eventually all lose ourselves to become, in each individual couple, one mind, one body, one spirit. That is the ideal of 'prajaa' the offspring surging forth as the knot of bliss as a result of the marriage. Each one of us as the children of the parent are a fruit of this kind of sacrifice, Dharma observance by the parent. Poet Bhavabhooti, another great admirer of Valmiki uses the words 'aananda granthirekoyam apatyamiti badhyate' to describe the marriage of Rama and Sita. The fruition of marriage is the blissful bond in the offspring. This elevates the couple dampati- jaya pati to the level of parent maataa-pitarau. This is the result of progressing in togetherness on the path of Dharma. In the advanced years of marriage, the husband is recommended to be treated by wife as a grown up 'son'; the wife elevates herself to the role of 'mother.' The husband progresses to be the representative of future generations.

Is marriage a civil contract? Is it an enforceable legal contract at all? Can marriage be broken and divorce be a legal and yet ethical dharmic religious stand? This issue is at the root of hot debates of today. Gay marriage issue is a part of this larger debate? Do you engage in the marriage status of today using vows drawn according to religious wordings drawn in the past to get the tax rebates

and loan privileges of today? Do you marry now for a divorce tomorrow? is the mute point?

This also addresses the issue of growing old with the marriage. In Hindu traditions, a second renewal of the marriage pledges is done when the couple reaches an age of sixty years. It is a review of how successfully couple has progressed in the partnered journey of marriage. It is a self introspection and time for corrective action. The maturity of body and mind need to be balanced, harmonized and synthesized. It is a time to show to the younger generation how long and happily the couple-spouse have lived as couple and progressed to be proud parents. It is a time to see how the marriage has been protected from the rocking's of the body, mind and speech over a time period. It is a time to see how much seasoning has occurred to each of the partners. It is time to get prepared to get to the next phase of 'grand-parenting'. That is 'tapas'. Seeing the generations, the family grow through children and grand children is the 'wealth generated from this tapas'. That is living the 'marriage vow'. Every party to marriage - the parent, the seniors, the priests, educators, relatives and state have a responsibility to live to this marriage vow standards.

A renewal of marriage vows ceremony can be for any married couple that wish to celebrate renewing their marriage vows in a unique and personal ceremony. Often these renewal of marriage vows ceremonies are associated with a special wedding anniversary, such as the tenth, twenty-fifth, fortieth, etc, but the ceremony is just as appropriate for couples at any stage of marriage. It is sometimes particularly relevant to those who have been through a period which put a strain on their relationship, but who wish to celebrate their renewed commitment to each other. Unresolved problems within people can bring about marriage problems, even though the marriage may have a healthy external environment.

Marriage is frequently promoted by many for religious reasons. Others think marriage is great for both the family unit and societal stability. The majority of experts also concur that the children profit when raised in a two-parent family. But, new investigation suggests there is an extra reason to encourage secure, caring marriage relationships. It is becoming more and more obvious that a good marriage is great for your health and well-being. Researchers also claim, that a stressful or abusive marriage relationship can actually have a disadvantageous impact on health and longevity and urge marriage couples to work to develop their relationship.

Bible Reading from Corinthians endorse this stand: Love endures and is kind. Love is not envious or jealous. Love wants not for itself. Love is not puffed up, nor does it behave wrongly. Love seeks not for its own. Love is not easily provoked. Love is not rude. Love thinks No evil. Love does not rejoice in wrong, but dwells in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, endures all things, and love never fails. Love is given to us by our family and friends. We learn to love by being loved. Learning to love and learning to live together is one of life's greatest challenges. This is the goal of a married life. But husband and wife should not confuse the love of worldly measures, for even if worldly success is found, only love can hold a marriage together. Mankind did not create love; God created love and teaches it to us. The measure of a true love is one given freely and a love that is freely accepted, just as God's love for us is given freely and unconditional. Today is a glorious day that God has made as you reaffirm your love and vows for each other. Both of you are blessed with God's greatest gift of all, an abiding and true love of each other, and the reward of a life long companion ship, that entered your life through the love in your lives. As you travel through this life together, remember it was love that got you here, it is love that will continue in your lives, and it is love that will make this union to endure. I ask that you guard your heart

and your love for one another, and hold it tightly in your hearts.

Unfortunately, it is becoming difficult to find families conforming to this standard. The challenges of religious identities start at the point of marriage, child grooming and grand parenting. That is a long span of time covering a minimum of thirty to fifty years in the life of a society and community.

In Jewish tradition love is not so much an emotion as it is a way of treating someone else. When the Torah and the Shema teach to love God, the rabbis explain that this love is to be demonstrated by behavior. If I love my wife it is not enough to feel it in my heart; I must show it in my actions. The traditional Jewish wedding vow says "Behold you are consecrated to me as my wife/husband according to the faith of Moses and Israel." Behold - here, with these words and with these rituals. You are consecrated to me - a husband and wife are designated exclusively for one another, and adultery is therefore forbidden. Furthermore, this is a sacred relationship. It requires each to treat the other as a child of God, and as one who was created in the image of God. This means that each must respect the other and treat the other with kindness. It means that neither can, under any circumstances, be abusive to the other in any way. It means that each must treat the other as a person, and not as an object. According to the faith of Moses and Israel - the sacred character of the marriage is to be expressed through Jewish life. It is to be enriched by participating as a couple and as a family in Jewish lifecycle events. It is to be enriched by coming together with songs and blessings at the Sabbath and festival table. It is to be enriched by participating in worship, in synagogue life, and in the Jewish community.

In Islamic tradition, marriage (nikah) is mutual agreement of bride and groom. Marriage (nikah) is a solemn and sacred social contract between bride and groom. This contract is a strong covenant

(mithaqun Ghalithun) as expressed in Quran 4:21). The marriage contract in Islam is not a sacrament. It is revocable. Both parties mutually agree and enter into this contract. Both bride and groom have the liberty to define various terms and conditions of their liking and make them a part of this contract. One matrimonial party expresses 'ijab' willing consent to enter into marriage and the other party expresses 'qubul' acceptance of the responsibility in the assembly of marriage ceremony. The contract is written and signed by the bride and the groom and their two respective witnesses. This written marriage contract ("Aqd-Nikah) is then announced publicly. The assembly of nikah is addressed with a marriage sermon (khutba-tun-nikah) by the Muslim officiating the marriage. In marriage societies, customarily, a state appointed Muslim judge (Qadi) officiates the nikah ceremony and keeps the record of the marriage contract. However any trust worthy practicing Muslim can conduct the nikah ceremony, as Islam does not advocate priesthood. The documents of marriage contract/certificate are filed with the mosque (masjid) and local government for record. Prophet Muhammad (S) made it his tradition (sunnah) to have marriage sermon delivered in the assembly to solemnize the marriage. The sermon invites the bride and the groom, as well as the participating guests in the assembly to a life of piety, mutual love, kindness, and social responsibility. The Khutbah-tun-Nikah begins with the praise of Allah. His help and guidance is sought. The Muslim confession of faith that 'There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His servant and messenger' is declared. The three Quranic verses (Quran 4:1, 3:102, 33:70-71) and one Prophetic saying (hadith) form the main text of the marriage. This hadith is: 'By Allah! Among all of you I am the most God-fearing, and among you all, I am the super most to save myself from the wrath of Allah, yet my state is that I observe prayer and sleep too. I observe fast and suspend observing them; I marry woman also. And he who turns away from my Sunnah has no relation with me'.

The Muslim officiating the marriage ceremony concludes the ceremony with prayer (Dua) for bride, groom, their respective families, the local Muslim community, and the Muslim community at large Marriage (nikah) is considered as an act of worship (ibadah). It is virtuous to conduct it in a Mosque keeping the ceremony simple. The marriage ceremony is a social as well as a religious activity. Islam advocates simplicity in ceremonies and celebrations.

Conclusion: A society which intends to safe guard the every child's right to get a right parentage and lineage, a religious and ethnic identity, a great cultural heritage, a right parental care, a congenial societal environment of ethical and moral values should give attention to these points. Vedic marriage, in the advocacy of parental arranged marriage, endorsed by society and priests, takes the background of at least three generations in to considerations related to marriage. That is the message from Ramayana about marriage. This message is reverberated in the 'Srinivasa kalyanotsava' in the Hindu temples when the Sanskrit line is said: The devotees enacting the part of bride's team express that this marriage of 'Gods' is made in the form of a sacred ritual yajna with a desire (jigeeshayaa) for reaching the 'bramha loka'. This is the eternal message about marriage from a tapasvi Sage Valmiki asking another sage tapah svadhyaya niratam, vaagvidam varam Narada the divine wandering sage and devotee of Lord Vishnu, which resulted in the redefinition of Veda in the form of Ramyana as Sitayana, Rama's great life as the glorious story of Sita. The ideal couple are made for each other through passion of penance (paraspara taph sampat phalaayita parasparu) on the model of gods.

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Sree Gurubyonnamaha

A study of the 'Role of Vibhishana in Valmiki's View'

– B.N.Sathyanarayana, New Delhi

Sree Raghavam DasharatmajAmaprimeyam,
Seetapatim RagukulanvayaRatnaDeepam
AjanubhahumAravindadalayataksham
Ramam nishacharavinashakaram Namami

God comes to the rescue of those who surrender to him with faith and belief.

The name Vibhishana is synonymous with Sharanagati – Total surrender in the Supreme Being. Though our religion has prescribed several ways like dhyana, yoga, karma etc., to reach God, it is believed that the easiest method that can be followed by all is Bhakti.

What is this Bhakti?

Srimad Bhāgavatam defines it as eight types - **'Sraavanam, keertanam, Vishnoh smaranam, pāda sevanam, archanam, vandanam, dāsyam, sakhyam and ātma nivedanam'**.

Listening about God, singing the Praises of God [uttering the Name of the Lord], meditating on the Lord, serving the Lord's lotus feet, worshipping the Lord with flowers, saluting the Lord, slaving, holding the feeling of a friend towards the Lord, offering everything to the Lord. We have been repeatedly stressing that Bhakti is the only easiest way and that it can be followed by all at this Age. The easiest and most effective form of Bhakti is, **'SHARANĀGATI' – TOTAL SURRENDER!**

Well! How to offer ourselves to the Lord? We should offer ourselves totally to God through a Guru - One who knows God, One who can speak with God, and One who has attained God and One whose words God would pay heed to. Such action is called 'Sharanāgati'.

Sharanāgati' does not mean getting things done as per our desire. 'I have surrendered unto God. So, all my desires will be fulfilled.' This is not 'Sharanāgati tattva' (philosophy of surrender). To

think on such lines only point to the mistaken notion. Sharanagati is to bend down to all that God does to us - the way that He desires to keep us - accepting it without any expectation, without any opposition and offering ourselves to it totally (without any condition) is the highest 'lakshana' (quality) of 'Sharanāgati'.

There is a classical statement of the Lord in the Valmiki Ramayana (Shloka VI-8-33):

Which justifies why we should have the faith that He will protect us? "Even if for once the devotee says: I am totally yours," says the Lord "whatever living being it be, I have to grant my Grace of Fearlessness; this is my vow ('vrata')".

Vibhishana decided that all his wealth and all that belonged to him could be sacrificed for the purpose of getting the Grace of Ramachandra. When Vibhishana went over to Rama, Rama knew that he had a pure heart that could not survive in the poisonous atmosphere of Lanka. So He took him and saved him.

If one has complete faith in God, one can achieve any difficult task.

The Vaishnava tradition talks of actually six components of the process of Sharanagati to the Lord. The conviction that 'He will protect me under all circumstances' is only one of them, though the most important. The following are the other five.

-“*AnukUlyasya sankalpaH*”: The determination to do only that which is favorable and pleasing to the Lord. It was here that the famous surrender of Bharata to Rama in the Ramayana failed in its norms. Bharata wanted to bring back Rama to the capitol and not allow Him to continue in the forest. This the Lord not only did not like but it went against His more fundamental requirement of upholding the promise

to which the father Dasaratha was committed. Bharata's *SharaNAgati* misses the willingness to be in tune with the Will of the Lord. It is the willingness to follow, to obey, which is more important than following or obeying.

- "*pratikUlasya varjanaM*": The avoidance of everything that is unfavourable or displeasing to the Lord.

Vibhishana excelled in both these criteria. He was prepared to forego his kith and kin in order to get away from the evil-doing Ravana. As soon as it was clear that Ravana was incorrigible, he rose up (in the skies) to leave him. His "*AnukUlyasya sankalpa*" was certified by Rama himself. "He has come with friendly intentions" (*mitra-bhAvena samprAptaH*') says Rama in the discussions that took place with his troupe and therefore Rama says he deserves acceptance.

There are two more criteria which are "*goptRtva-varaNaM*" (the adoption of the Lord as the only Protector) and "*Atma-nikshhepaH*" (Laying of one's entire self at the disposal of the Lord). The devotee realizes in due time that whatever he may do, his past karma and present obstacles to a spiritual pursuit do not give him the spiritual advance he yearns for in spite of the regularity of his life and purity of conduct and attempt to control his senses. He feels that something else other than his conduct, knowledge and faith is necessary. He realizes that even if he surrenders to God he is not able to ingratiate himself into the Lord's favour. He needs somebody to intercede on his behalf with the Lord. It is generally believed that it is the Mother Goddess Lakshmi who intercedes on behalf of the devotee. But more specifically this interceding usually takes place through the Guru whose nature it is to intercede on behalf of the devotee. The Guru enables the devotee to rid himself of the burden which he is unable to bear any more. This is technically called 'laying off the burden' or 'returning the burden to its rightful owner' and

known as '*bhAra-nyAsa*' in Shri Vaishnava jargon.

The last one in the list of six fundamental components of an ideal surrender is "*kArpaNyaM*" — the feeling of total triviality and nothingness vis-à-vis the Lord.

The only *SharaNAgati* in the Ramayana that satisfies all the six norms for surrender is that of **Vibhishana**. He is therefore taken as the role model for *SharaNAgati*.

In sum, *sharanagati* or surrender is certainly the final command of the Lord to all humanity. The Lord says in so many words: Surrender to Me, in heart and soul, — by all your being, sarva-bhAvena, — even your will. Then your future, either here or elsewhere, shall be my concern.

Vibhishana's Family Background

Vibhishana was the younger brother of Ravana, the king of Lanka. Kumbhakarna was his other brother. Shurpanakha is their only sister. A Brahmin sage named Vishrava was the father of these four Asuras and their mother was an Asura woman by the name of Kaikasi. Vishrava is also the father of Kubera, but by a previous marriage.

Once Ravana, Kumbakarna and Vibhishana performed severe penance to invoke the presence of Brahma. Brahma appeared before them and asked them what they wanted? He said that he would grant them whatever boon they wanted. Kumbakarna wanted to ask that he should never be at anyone's mercy (*Nirdaya*). But by a slip of the tongue, he asked for "*Nidra*" (*Sleep*) Brahma declared, "*So be it.*" Ravana asked for freedom from death expect by humans because he considered them trivial beings. Vishnu then decided to come in human form to put an end to Ravana. What did Vibhishana pray for? Despite being a Rakhshasa Vibhishana asks, "*Oh Lord! Fill my heart with compassion and make me lead a righteous life.*" "Because of this boon,

Vibhishana remained totally unaffected inspire of all the humiliation and abuse by Ravana and his sons.

Vibhishana as a Vishnu Bhakta :

Vibhishana was a great Satwic individual. From the time of his early childhood, he was spending all his time in thinking of the name of the Lord. When Vibhishana was in penance, Brahma appeared and asked him what boon he wanted. Vibhishana, inturn, said that he only wanted to have his mind fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord. He prayed that he be given the strength by which he will always be at the feet of the Lord. Because Vibhishana had a satwic mind and a satwic heart, he could reach Ramachandra. Vibhishana gave up and broke his connections with all his brothers, to his property and his wealth and reached the feet of Ramachandra

When Vibhishana pleads with his brother Ravana to return Sita to Rama, Ravana ridicules and insults him and asks him to go away. After all his efforts fail, Vibhishana ultimately comes to Rama's camp with folded hands, seeking protection. Sugriva and his entire army are against accepting Vibhishana. Rama says: "Whoever comes to me in desperation, I will protect him from the fear. This is my vow".

Thus Vibhishana always remained compassionate, never yielded to hatred and anger. Since his heart was full of compassion, he secured God's Grace and proximity to the Divine. God is so merciful that He will come ten steps towards you; if you but take one step towards him

Vibhishana was known for his rectitude and his unswerving determination to tread the path of virtue. He vigorously opposed Ravana's kidnapping of Sita. When he could not convince his elder brother, Vibhishana left Lanka and joined the army of Rama. He played a major role in the victory of Rama, assisting him in countering the magical warfare employed by the Rakshasas.

When Hanuman entered Lanka, he noticed Vibhishana. Vibhishana told Hanuman, "*Hanuman! I am living amidst wicked rakshasas like the tongue surrounded by sharp teeth. How long have I to live like this? How will I secure the Grace of Rama? When will I be blessed with the bliss of being at the Divine presence? I have long been waiting for that Divine moment.*" Vibhishana lamented in this manner.

Then Hanuman gave to Vibhishana a significant message, "*Vibhishana! Do not think that you are alone subject to these ordeals. There are many great souls who experience similar ordeals. The rakshasas constantly harass the sages, the Avathars and all the good men. However, take note of one fact. Tongue came first and the teeth which emerged later will drop away in the middle course. Likewise the rakshasas also will fall away soon. Do not have any doubt on this score!*"

Hanuman then went on, "*Vibhishana! You have become attached to the lotus feet of Rama. Cling on to them firmly. Either he should bless you because of your perseverance, or you should merge in him in course of time. There is no other way. It is wrong to give up in the middle. This is not the mark of a true devotee. What is devotion? It is not mere repetition of Rama's name endlessly. While contemplating on Rama, you must take part in the service of Rama.*"

Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, enquired from Hanuman whether Rama will accept his homage and take him under His protecting shade. He said, "*I am the brother of His worst enemy, whom He has vowed to destroy; I am a member of the demonic race; I am unacquainted with the Vedas or shastras or the rituals.*" Then Hanuman replied, "*O you fool! Do you think that He cares for ritual correctitude or family status or scholarship?*"

If so, how could He accept me, a monkey?" That settled the matter. Vibhishana was assured of Grace.

Vibhishana together with four of his companions reach Rama's place. Halting in the sky itself, Vibhishana asks Rama to give a refuge to him. Sugreeva tells Rama that he cannot trust Vibhishana the demon. Then Rama asks for opinion of the leaders in his group. Angada, shrabha, Jambavan and Mainda expressed their apprehensions to accept Vibhishana. But Hanuman says that Vibhishana need not be doubted because he thinks that Vibhishana understands the merits in Rama and demerits in Ravana. Hanuman requests Rama to take his final decision on the matter.

Back in Rama's camp, Sugriva, Lakshmana and Vibhishana discussed the ways and means to cross the sea. Rama prayed to the Lord of the Ocean for a passage for which Samudra raja appeared before him and suggested that they build a bridge with the help of the architect Nala who was in the Vanara army. The bridge was completed in 5 days using stones and boulders. The entire Vanara army then crossed the sea and reached Lanka.

In the war that followed, Ravana was inconsolable by the death of his Son Indrajit, Brother Kumbakarna and others. This grief turned into anger. Ravana attacked the vanaras with all his pent up fury and hatred. Lakshmana and Vibheeshana tried to bar Ravana's way but they were not successful. When he saw Vibheeshana, Ravana's fury doubled and he shot a blazing arrow at him but Lakshman stopped it midway. Ravana shot another blazing brand at Lakshmana who fell down unconscious. Hanuman fetched the hill of herbs to revive Lakshmana.

Rama confronts ten-headed Ravana. A terrible battle ensued between Rama and Ravana. The devas and gandharvas watched with beating hearts and bated breath. Rama and Ravana let go

divine astras, one more potent than the other. Rama finally used the great Brahmastra. With a snake like hiss the astra darted forth and pierced the magnificent wide chest of Ravana. This was the seat of all his power and strength and is now destroyed by Rama's burning shaft. Ravana's bow slithered from his dying hands. With a crash that shook the three worlds he fell down.

The vanaras shouted and danced with joy. The remaining rakshasas were frightened and scattered like scared mice. The devas showered flowers from heaven and the Sun smiled his warm blessings. Vibheeshana was moved to tears by the pity he felt for his brother. Rama comforted him by saying "A hero who dies in the battlefield should not be mourned. He died a brave death and now shines bright as the Sun in the warriors heaven" Vibheeshana refused to perform the last rites for Ravana. Rama, the noble, the valiant tells him that, "All enmity ends with death" - and that he should perform the funeral rites for his brother to help him to reach his Pitru loka - Lanka mourned and Vibheeshana was crowned the King of Lanka.

Since Vibhishana assisted the enemy of his clan to defeat his kinsmen, Vibhishana is often denounced as the biggest traitor ever. Although his devotion to virtue is praised, he is not accorded much respect, his character being unfavorably compared to that of his brother Kumbhakarna, who was loyal to Ravana till the very end, perishing in defending his homeland.

Lord Rama said, "As the supreme personality of Godhead, it is my eternal principle that if any living being takes shelter of me, even once saying I am yours, then I award him freedom from all fears. Even if Ravana were to come and surrender to me, I would give him all protection" Rama sent Hanuman to fetch Sita. Sita was so happy with relief at the victory of her beloved Lord Rama and wanted to see Rama as soon as

possible. After Sita proves her purity- Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Hanuman, Sugreeva & Vibheeshana returned to Ayodhya in Pushpaka Vimana. Ayodhya was in a frenzy of ecstatic joy. Rama and Bharata met as no brothers had met before. Tears of happiness were in all eyes. The brothers prostrated to their Guru Vasishtha. Bharata said to Rama, “Brother, take back now what always belonged to you-your crown, your people, your kingdom, your throne. I have faithfully served your sandals these past fourteen years. Now relieve me of my responsibility. Rama donned the coronation robes. Mother Sita was dressed beautifully in proper queenly style. She was more beautiful than ever now, after having endured all the hardships of the forest and suffering at Ravana’s hands in Lanka. Rama and Sita were seated on the thrones. Lakshmana was near by. Bharata & Satrugna held the royal white umbrella

behind Rama. Sugreeva & Vibheeshana gently waved the fans. Rama was crowned king by sage Vasishtha. The dream of his Guru, of the queen mothers, of the loving and devoted brothers and of doting Ayodhyavasis was now fulfilled

After the coronation ceremony of lord Rama, Vibhishana returns to Lanka.

In the epic Ramayana Hanuman and Vibhishana are the two important personalities who achieve the status of chiranjeevatva and are counted among the seven great chiranjeevis – Ashwathama, Bali, Vyasa, Hanuman, Vibhishana, ParushuRama and Kripacharya.

Our salutations to Lord Rama and all the seven chiranjeevis

*Mangalam Kosalendraaya mahaneeya gunabdayee
Chakravartitanoojaaya sarvaboumaaya Mangalam*



Rbhus in Rg Veda and their skill in rejuvenation

By **Ananth**, USA

The whole Rg Veda has been interpreted by Sayana during the reign of Vijayanagara kings (Bukka in particular).

The essence of his interpretation is :

The three Ribhavas converted) one cup into 4 by magic. Allegorically the cup was given by Twashta (skin). They rejuvenated an old couple. They made an old cow young to feed a calf. They also made a horse young so that Indra can go faster and faster. The slokas need extensive study by scholars to ascertain what kind or rejuvenation technique they had developed.

Even Vasishtha, the great Rishi, worships the Ribus as सुहस्ताः (with skilled hands). There is another Sukha (161) in the same First Mandala (Rishi is Deerghatama) praising Ribhavas. This is clearer for our purpose. Sayana in his elaborate interpretation makes it clearer.

The Ribhava tris (they wore the same dress etc)

who invited for a yaga. Devas sent Agni as messenger dressed as the Ribhuvas. There was only one cup for the oblations. After mutual suspicion and discussion they decided to make the cup into 4 and all took the oblations. That itself was a magical feat.

In sloka 3, there is clear reference to getting one horse out of another. Making a cow with practically no skin, rejuvenated and suckling a calf again.

The word used is कर्त्वः Sanya says:

अश्वः कर्त्वः एकस्मात् अश्वत् अश्रान्तरं कर्तव्यं इति अर्यः
धेनुः कर्त्वा-चर्मरहिता मृता गोः नित्यदोग्ध्री पुनः नूनना कार्या

The root कृ has two meanings. To do and to hurt (1) कृ becomes कुरू (2) कृ becomes कृन्ध

In Sukta 161, there is a sloka in which blood and flesh (mamsa) are mentioned. Perhaps they cut off the skin and manipulated the blood vessels and bones and reattached the skin to the animal.



Stotras of Rāma as a Divinity in Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa

Swami Swaroopananda, Madhurai

Abstract

The Almighty Lord had assumed different Avatars at different times and our sacred texts like Śrīmad Bhāgavata, Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa and The Purāṇas bring out details of all such Avatars of Lord Sri Vishnu. His Avatāra as Śrī Rāma is of great significance to human beings.

Śrī Rama is known as a Puruṣoṭhama. Sage Vālmiki himself has defined the term Puruṣoṭhama thus :

शुभं वा यदि वा पापं यो हि वाक्यमुदीरितम् ।
सत्येन परिगृह्णाति स वीरः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ (IV-30-72)

Why Śrī Rāma is being worshipped by one and all in preference to other forms of Godhood can be understood by a reference to the following verses :

१. यश्चरामं न पश्येत्तु ये च रामो न पश्यति ।
निन्द्रितः सर्वलोकेषु स्वात्माप्येनं विगर्हते । (II-17-14)
२. अप्यूहं जीवितं जह्यां त्वां वा सीते सलक्ष्मणाम् ।
न तु प्रतिज्ञां सन्धुत्य ब्राह्मणेभ्यो विशेषतः ॥ (III-10-8)
३. सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते ।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम ॥ (VI-18-33)
४. धर्मात्मा सत्यसन्धश्च रामो दाशरटिर्यादि ।
पौरुषे चाप्रतिद्वन्द्वस्तदैनं जहि रावणिम् ॥ (VI-90-69)
५. रामो रामो राम इति प्रजानामभवन् कथाः ।
रामभूतं जगद्भूद् रामे राज्यं प्रशासति ॥
(VI-128-102)

Lord Śiva proclaims the Rāma Nāma is equivalent to Śrī Viṣṇusahasranāma.

श्री राम राम रामेति रमे रामे मनोरमे ।
सहस्रनामतत्तुल्यं श्री राम नाम वरानने ॥

Sage Viśvāmitra declared in the court of Daśaratha that Śrī Rāma is none other than the virtues personified. He is the seat of Tapas.

एष विग्रहवान्धर्म एव वीर्यवतां वरः ।
एष विद्याधिको लोके तपसश्चपरायणम् ॥ (I-21-10)

In fact Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa is full of the divinity of Śrī Rāma from beginning to end. A couple of lines of the very first śloka of Rāmāyaṇa Mahākāvya makes very clear about the Supreme Godhead of Śrī Rāma when it says :

रामेण प्रतिहन्यते कलिमलं रामाय कार्यं ननः ।
रामात् त्रस्यति कालभीमभुजगो रामस्य सर्वं वशे ॥

The third śloka also supports the truth by saying :
ब्रह्माविष्णुमहेशाद्यो यस्यांशो लोकसाधवत्रः ।
नमामि देवं चिद्रूपं विशुद्धिं परमं भजे ॥

As was the appearance of Śrī Rāma in four arms before his mother Kausalya, so was his end in the form of Lord Viṣṇu and in between various episodes amply prove the divinity of Śrī Rāma as an Avatāra of Lord Viṣṇu.

The Genesis of Vedānta Darshana in the Rāmāyaṇa

-Dr. Vanitha Ramaswamy

Abstract

यं पालयसि धर्मं त्वं धृत्या च नियमेन च ।
स वै राघवशार्दूल धर्मस्त्वामभिरक्षतु ॥ रा. ॥

Briefly 'Dharma protects its protector' – this is the parting benediction of mother Kausalya to her son Śrī Rāma. Through the ages the Rāmāyaṇa has been the religious text book of the common man and the scholar alike among the Hindus. It is not only one of the National epics of India, but also the most cherished gem of Sanskrit poetry. The Rāmāyaṇa stands in a class by itself, sublime in its thoughts yet simple in their expression, obviously the philosophy, culture and values of the people are rooted in the Rāmāyaṇa and in turn the Rāmāyaṇa is rooted in the Vedas.

Hindu religion was and is merely Dharma-a word synonymous with religion. Although this religion has no distinguishing name of its own there is in it a common basis viz. the faith in the final authority of the Vedas— वेदप्रामाण्यम् in spiritual matters. The vedic culture permits worldly enjoyment within the bounds of Dharma (धर्माविरोधो कामोऽस्मि) and also gives importance to the final emancipation of the soul. The Vedas have fully influenced the later literature especially the epics Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhāratha. In the words of Prof. Ghatge— “We cannot open an Indian book without being thrown back on an earlier authority which is the veda and which is regarded as the basis of all our knowledge both sacred and profane. The refined poetry of Kālidāsa, the philosophical vigour of Kapila, the voluptuous mysticism of Jayadeva

and the epic simplicity of Vyāsa and Vālmiki, all admirable in themselves would however float before our eyes like the mirage of a desert unless they are provided with the historic background by the Vedas. Likewise all the systems of philosophy or Darshanas and all codes of law profess to impart the teaching of the Veda.”

Chronologically the Rāmāyaṇa stands midway between the Vedas and the Vedānta darshanas. Like any other subject even the Vedānta Darshana evolved from the Vedas and through the Rāmāyaṇa into a fullfledged independent system. Instead of looking for a direct reference in the Rāmāyaṇa, we can look for indirect references to various concepts of Vedānta like birth, death, karma, ātman or jīva, Jagat, Brahma, maya, mukti etc. in different contexts. Opinions differ regarding the nature of the final emancipation or moksha. But there is common agreement that it is permanent release from all sufferings.

The books describing these thoughts are called षड्दर्शनस viz. Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣikā, Pūrva mīmāṃsa and Uttara mīmāṃsa. Kapila, Patañjali, Gauthama, Kaṇāda, Jaimini and Bādarāyaṇa respectively are the founders of these six systems. The uttara mīmāṃsa is called Vedānta Darshana.

Further we have what are called 'theistic schools'— आस्तिकदर्शनम् (which believe in the authority of the Vedas) and etheistic schools— नास्तिकदर्शनस (which do not believe in the authority

of the Vedas). The above mentioned six systems come under the theistic school. The occasional revolt in the Rāmāyaṇa against the rituals has given rise to the atheistic schools called Bauddha, Jaina and Charvaka schools.

What is Vedānta? The word 'Vedānta' is impersonal and means only culmination of wisdom. The Upanishads state that it is the fountain head of all existence i.e. Consciousness and Bliss.

Vedānta tells us that life has value against death. Good living has value against bad living. Peace and harmony has value against Violence and discord. Universal life has value against narrow life. Divine life has value against animal life. According to Vedānta life is an adventure on a continuous everlasting cosmic theme. The Vedas call the basic reality by terms like Ṛta and Dharma which simply mean the cosmic order both inside and outside of us. This order itself is Brahman, a causeless cause of everything on earth and beyond. This is the Truth. What is Darshana? 'Darshana' means 'seeing' or 'vision' i.e. Realizing this highest Truth.

सत्यमेवेश्वरो लोके सत्ये धर्मः सदाश्रितः ।

सत्यमूलानि सर्वाणि सत्यान्नास्ति परमं परम् ॥ रा. ॥

'Truth alone is God in the world, piety ever hinges on Truth. All have their roots in Truth, there is no goal higher than Truth.'

Thus Vedānta Darshana is a constructive approach to life and never averse to the activities of life. Here kāma and artha are weighed in terms of serving dharma Mokṣa or mukti the ultimate goal is not escape, it is growing upto the fullest expectations of existence for which one is fashioned.

The Vedānta Darshana is a scientific account of

life as it exists in relation to the universe. With its universal perspective and deep comprehension of the problem of Truth and Life, it rises above the relativity of time and place. The whole charm is in its interest in the consolidation of value we call as goodness, truth, harmony, beauty, peace and so on. Thus Vedānta Darshana is not a dogma but a constant self analysis to discover oneself.

Where else do you find all these concepts more strikingly than in the Rāmāyaṇa? Great personalities like Rāma, Seetha, Dasharatha, Kausalya, Lakṣmaṇa, Sumithra, Bharatha, Hanuman, Sugriva, the holy sages, the people of Ayodhya, men and women great and small. Many sinners under various complicated situations are presented before us.

Like any other subject in the world even the doctrine of emancipation has surfaced through the process of evolution. The various aspects of Vedānta found in the Rāmāyaṇa have been developed into full fledged systems of Darshana. The ritual portions found in the Rāmāyaṇa evolved into karma mīmāṃsa, the element of upāsana or worship into the concept of bhakti, the philosophical speculations into Vedānta darshana, the logic or reasoning into Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, that of creation into Sāṅkhya, the transcendental consciousness of the sages into Yoga.

This paper deals with the imposing presence of the various concepts of Vedanta Darshana as related to its three well known schools namely, Advaita, Dvaita, and Viśiṣṭādvaita with extracts from the Rāmāyaṇa.



Āditya Worship by Rāma in Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa

-Dr. Shashi Tiwari

The sun has attracted the attention of mankind for adoration and worship from the very beginning of human history. It has attained the position of pre-eminence among the deities of nature in ancient times. The prominence, beauty and splendour of solar orb, its importance in the creation and maintenance of life, its primal role in the cosmic evolution had secured for the sun a special place in Indian religious thoughts. The vedic religion consisted of prayers and sacrifices. It recognised many gods, almost all being idealisations of natural phenomena. In Vedic hymns sun has been praised under various forms and names as Sūrya, Savitṛ, Mitra, Viṣṇu, Pūṣan, Āditya, Rohita, Vivasvat etc. Sun-worship of Vedic Āryans is mainly based on a spiritual background. In the R̥gveda Savitṛ is the divine object of meditation. In the Upaniṣads the sun is regarded as the best manifestation of the supreme power.

In the epic period the religion of Indians was purely Vedic. In the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata the Vedic tradition of sun-worship is maintained with some changes and developments. Śrī Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira were well versed in the Vedās and they worshipped the sun-god. Both the epics inform about the ways of sun-worship, and its popularity in the period of their composition. In the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, we find many references of sun-worship. For the first time there is a specific reference to a sun-sect known as Saurasin the Mahābhārata. There are many descriptions in the epics which tend to show the glory and prominence of the sun-god during that period.

In the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, the parents of Śravaṇakumāra are described as performers of Sandhyopāsanā i.e., invocation of the Savitṛ god in the morning and evening (II.64.33). Again Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā are mentioned as invoking Savitṛ in a proper way (II.87.19). Some R̥sis are also mentioned as performing Sandhyā with their hands raised upward.

In the Aranyakāṇḍa Rāma while searching for Sītā here and there asks Āditya about Sītā and describes Him as the witness of all, that takes place on the earth and of every good or bad act—

आदित्य भो लोककृताकृतज्ञ
लोकस्य सत्यानृतकर्मसाक्षिन् ।
मम प्रिया सा क गता हता वा
शंसस्व मे शोकहतस्य सर्वम् ॥ (63.16)

In the Sundara Kāṇḍa, Hanumān pays homage to Sūrya, Mahendra, Pavana and Brahmā with joined palms, before he leaves for Lanka—

स सूर्याय महेन्द्राय पवनाय स्वयम्भुवे ।
भूतेभ्यश्चाञ्जलिं कृत्वा चकार गमने मतिम् ॥ (I.8)

Again in the same Kāṇḍa, the Sun-god is respectfully remembered by Hanumān alongwith other gods namely Varuṇa, Indra, Soma, Marut and the twin Aśvins. (13.67)

In the Rāmāyaṇa's Yuddha Kāṇḍa we find, one whole canto in the praise of Āditya. That part of epic is popularly known as Ādityahṛdaya Stotra (6.105). In some editions of Rāmāyaṇa it is numbered 106 or 107. Dr. Sushila Kumara De opines that this portion is a later addition, but by the style and language it seems to be a genuine part of original Rāmāyaṇa. According to the Kaṭaka Tikā of this prayer sage Agastya is its seer, Āditya Hṛdaya Bhūta, Bhagavān Brahmā is its deity and victory is its purpose. In the introduction of this Stotra, it is mentioned that before going to fight, with Rāvaṇa, R̥si Agastya has advised Śrī Rāma to worship the sun-god. Agastya tells Rāma that “this is the old secret by which thou will conquer all the foes in the battle. It is a holy prayer which destroys all enemies, gives victory, removes all sins, sorrows and distress, increases life and is the blessing of all blessings. Having daily repeated the Ādityahṛdaya, worship the rising sun, who is respected by both

gods and demons, who gives light to all bodies and is the rich lord of all the worlds.

Āditya is praised as a Lord of day (Dinādhipati), victory (Jaya), powerful (Vira) and fast walker (Sāraṅga). He helps to blossom the lotus flower (Padma–Prabodha). Sūrya destroys darkness, ignorance, cold and enemies. He is Lord of all lights. He kills the persons who are ungrateful.

तमोघ्नाय हिमघ्नाय शत्रुघ्नायामितात्मने ।
कृतघ्नघ्नाय देवाय ज्योतिषां पतये नमः ॥ (VI.105.20)

In this hymn Sūrya is praised as a Lord of universe (Jagatpati) and is identified with all the great gods in the typical sectarian fashion. He is the Lord of even Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all creatures.

ब्रह्मेशानाच्युतेशाय सूर्यादित्यवर्चसे ।
नाशयत्येष वै भूतं तदेव सृजति प्रभुः ।
पायत्येष तपत्येष वर्षत्येष गभस्तिभिः ॥ (VI.105.19,22)

This aspect is expressed by his few names as Sarvabhavodbhava, Viśvabhāvana, Devadeva, Hiraṇyaretā, Hiraṇyagarbha, Rgyajuḥsāmapāragah etc., found in the Ādityahṛdaya hymn.

The worship of Sun as time is Vedic in origin, but its development under the impact of astronomical advancement is a theme of the epics and the Purāṇas. Here is Rāmāyaṇa his Lordship of the planets is also indicative of his role as the maker of time.

नक्षत्रग्रहतराणामधिपः । (VI.105.15)

In spite of the fact that Sūrya Deva is a life giving god full of benevolent qualities, his malevolent side has not been forgotten in this hymn. It is mentioned that he is the destroyer of the universe. His names like Mrtyu, Sarvatāpana are indicative of this aspect. Śrī Rāma has praised Sūrya as a great moral and ethical force also, when he ascribes him the beholder of good and bad deeds of men in Aranyakāṇḍa (63.16).

In Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa we find some important hints about the method of Sun-worship. In many ways Vedic tradition is maintained here, but

certainly with some new elements. At several occasions it is said in the epics that the Sun is to be worshipped by means of Japa of hymns sacred to him. Śrī Rāma invokes Āditya by the Japa of Ādityahṛdaya hymn after Ācamana. The concentration and purity of mind, before the recitation of hymn is considered essential.

आदित्यं प्रेक्ष्य जप्त्वेदं परं हर्षमवाप्तवान् ।
त्रिराचम्य शुचिर्भूत्वा धनुरादाय वीर्यवान् ॥ (VI.105.29)

Pleased with the incantation of prayer and the worship Āditya appeared before Rāma in the end and blessed him (105.31).

In the Rāmāyaṇa, there is a class of Sun-worshippers which is referred to as worshipping Sūrya as Ūrdhvbāhus.

आदित्यमुपतिष्ठन्ते नियमादूर्ध्वबाहवः ।
एते परे विशालाक्षि मुनयः संशितव्रताः ॥ (II.95.7)

Accordingly some Rṣis facing the rising sun invoke and above Āditya with arms unstretched, a ritual called Upasthāna. There are frequent references to the performance of Sandhyā in the Rāmāyaṇa. Particular stress is laid on performing the rite at the appointed time. Viśvāmītra is often found urging Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who accompanied him to his hermitage, to perform Sandhyā in time (I.23.2,3). Its main feature is adoring Āditya with offerings of water and hummings of Gāyatrī.

Worship of gods was a common feature of the religious life of Indian people in Rāmāyaṇa age. But Āditya-worship performed by Rāma proves his supremacy among all the deities adored at that time. It also reflects the Advancement of Sun-worship towards sectarianism, as the Ādityahṛdaya hymn extoles the sun-god to supreme height and establishes him as Brahman. By the worship of Āditya Rāma was successful in killing Rāvaṇa and winning the battle. From the above description the inference should be drawn that Āditya-worship in Rāmāyaṇa by Rāma was solely based on Vedic thought, but it was enriched by certain indigenous epic traditions also. ॐ