



RAMAYANA: THE WORLD'S MESSAGES TO EVERY MANKIND

Ram Krishna Mandal¹

ABSTRACT

*The Ramayana influences Indian culture, literature, and art. Its teachings continue to inspire millions around the world. In the Indian context, Ramayana and Mahabharata are the most cited texts on indigenous approaches to international relations. **Objective:** The article examines some of the pertinent themes from Valmiki's epic Ramayana, which remain relevant and even prescient to international relations in the contemporary era. **Methods and Materials:** This study uses a qualitative approach and is primarily descriptive, drawing on secondary data for its design. **Results and Discussion:** Anger and revenge do not bring any good; they do not allow us to move on to better things. Lord Rama and Sita were kind to all. They even forgave Kaikeyi, Rama's stepmother, the one responsible for sending him into exile. **Findings:** Lord Ram epitomized adherence to dharma, the righteous way of living. Dharma (righteousness) is more important than any divine boon. **Conclusion:** It is the duty of every parent to raise their kids with affection and care and to instil in them the values of courage, discipline, respect, and deference to elders.*

INTRODUCTION

The Ramayana embodies the values of dharma (duty), loyalty, honour, and the power of virtue over evil. It teaches important moral principles and life lessons. The Ramayana influences Indian culture, literature, and art. Its teachings continue to inspire millions around the world. In the Indian context, Ramayana and Mahabharata are the most cited texts on indigenous approaches to international relations (Parashar 2013, Narlikar and Narlikar 2014, Shahi 2018, Bisht 2019). However, the Indian narrative tradition of Ramayana offers an equally insightful yet far more succinct viewpoint to understand various aspects of the 'international'. Ramayana achieved a more profound and much wider influence on Southeast Asian societies than the Mahabharata, transmitting Indian thoughts on the code of conduct for individuals, society, and states [Bajpai, Ravi Dutt, 2023]. The world knows the Ramayana as an epic written in Sanskrit by Maharishi Valmiki, most likely in the eighth century BCE. It narrates the life story of Prabhu Shree

¹ Prof. (Dr.) Ram Krishna Mandal, Professor, Department of Economics, Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University, Cooch Behar-736101, West Bengal, India, E-mail: rkm_1966@yahoo.co.in, Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9621-7084>



Ram, the Supreme Being who became the most revered Hindu God. The Ramayana is a seven-part epic that spans nearly 500 chapters and 24,000 verses, making it one of the longest and most ancient literary works. The epic story of Prabhu Shree Ram is recounted in one of the Hindu religion's most venerated and celebrated scriptures. Rama, considered Lord Vishnu's seventh incarnation, was born in Ayodhya as the son of Kaushalya and Raja Dashratha (Balkaran and Dorn 2012, 664). The central theme of this fabled religious epic is the life story of Prabhu Shree Ram, particularly the period between his banishment and return to Ayodhya [1].

There are so many books that lose their value with time. When it was written, it might have been correct according to that period; however, after a long time, it demands some change with time. Nevertheless, The Ramayan is a scripture that holds even today. What was right thousands of years ago is still right from Ramayan's point of view, and what was wrong then is still wrong today. Ram Rajya was the best at that time and it is still the best, that is why we imagine making our country Ram Rajya. Ram was the ideal and obedient son of that time, and even today, every parent wishes their son to be like Ram. Sita was faithful and loyal to Ram at that time and even today all fathers wish their daughters to be like her, and every man wants their wife to be like her. Bharat, Laxman, and Shatrughan were obedient to Ram. Ram's order was everything to them; even today, everyone wants brothers like them. Hanumanji was the best servant of his time and did lifelong service to Shree Ram. To date, there is still no better servant than him. The characters in the Ramayan may have been about Gods and legends; however, some faced challenges and dealt with problems just like us. Sometimes they made the right decision and sometimes they did not. But there are things to take away from all these stories. So Ramayan is equally important for today's generation and future generations as it was previously [2].

OBJECTIVE: The article examines the pertinent themes from Valmiki's epic Ramayana, which remain relevant and even prescient to international relations in the contemporary era.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Design and approach: This study uses a qualitative and descriptive approach, drawing on secondary data for its design. Secondary sources of ancient Indian knowledge, such as scriptures like the Ramayan, articles, websites, and online journals published at various times, are used to collect the data.

Analysis: The materials gathered from the various sources have been examined, confirmed, and arranged methodically under the relevant heading to hold the necessary presentation and conclusion.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Narrative Rama, the eldest son of Dasharatha (the King of Ayodhya) was the designated crown prince. Just a day before Ram's coronation as the regent, Queen Kaikeyi, the youngest consort of Dasharatha, asked the king to honour the two boons (which he had granted her for saving his life). She asked for the coronation of her son, Bharata, and fourteen years of exile for Rama. To honour his father's pledge, Rama left the kingdom with his wife, Sita, and younger brother Lakshmana. Distraught with his mother's selfishness, Bharata pursued Rama to the forest and pleaded him to return to Ayodhya, an appeal that went unheeded. In the absence of Rama and Lakshmana, Ravana abducted Sita through deceit. Rama sought assistance from Sugriva, the head of the renegade group of Banaras (variously depicted as apes, monkeys, or forest-dwelling people in different versions of the epic), to find Sita. Sugriva had hidden from his elder brother Bali, the mighty king of the Banaras. Rama killed Bali to win Sugriva's loyalty and then slayed Ravana with the army of Banaras. Eventually, Rama returned with Sita and Lakshmana to rule over Ayodhya; his reign is called Rama Rajya – the epitome of good governance.

Given that the story centres on Ayodhya's royal family and their lives, the text offers detailed accounts of statecraft, rajadharma (duties of a ruler), diplomacy, and the ethics of war in several places. As Bharata pleaded with his elder brother to give up the hermit's life and return to the throne, the ensuing 'Rama-Bharata dialogue' is one of the most profound discourses on statecraft. Amidst the war with Rama, fearing the complete annihilation of the entire demon clan, Ravana forcefully awakens his brother Kumbhakarna to fight. The 'Kumbhakarna-Ravana dialogue' gives a brilliant exposition on statecraft and rajadharma. After Sita's abduction, as Rama and Lakshmana search for her, they meet Hanuman, and the interaction among them is one of the finest examples of diplomatic protocol and ambassadorial etiquette. Just before the commencement of the combat, Rama sent Angad, the Vanara crown prince, as an emissary to deliver his message to Ravana, another example that highlights the roles and responsibilities of an envoy. Hiding behind a tree, Rama shot an arrow that felled Bali; as the Vanara king lay dying, the 'Rama-Bali exchange' explains the idea of 'Just War'. The killing of Bali is also an example of the duties of a ruler and a conscientious citizen in upholding the rajadharma. Rama had to find a passage through the ocean to reach Lanka; he spent three days requesting the ocean for a meeting. On the fourth day, Rama decided to punish the ocean and explained the types of characters in human and non-human forms that can be subdued only through coercive measures (Bajpai, Ravi Dutt, 2023).

Prabhu Shree Ram: Shree Ram was an obedient son of King Dashratha, who gave up his entire kingdom and went to the forest for fourteen years without thinking even for a moment just because his father promised his stepmother Kaikeyi. The moment is at such a time when his coronation is to take place the following day and he gets to wander in the forest instead. He could have easily refused to go because the king had made a promise to his wife and not to Shree Ram. What does his promise have to do with Ram? Being the eldest son, Shree Ram was due to succeed his father as king. But Ram did not



even utter a word on this because he wanted to teach us that, humiliating your father and doing according to your wish is not a sign of an ideal son, not only this but he did not even bear a grudge against his stepmother Kaikeyi.

Lesson: Be forgiving in nature. Anger and revenge do not bring any good; they do not allow us to move on to better things. Lord Rama and Sita were kind to all. They even granted forgiveness to Kaikeyi, Rama's stepmother, the one responsible for sending him into exile. We should always grant forgiveness to others. Respect your parents and elders. Be polite to everyone. Follow Dharma, no matter what circumstances may. As parents, we must teach our children to respect and honour the elders of the family. Lord Rama exemplifies the virtues of the ideal son, and his actions can serve as a valuable lesson for our children.

Laxman: Laxman was Shree Ram's loyal brother who always supported and protected him. Laxman also joined Shree Ram and Sitaji in exile, although there was no order given to him from his father like Shree Ram had. He joined them just to serve Shree Ram and Sitaji because they were in the place of Father and Mother to Laxman. He took it as a chance to serve, not a chance to enjoy his power and freedom. It will surprise a lot of you to hear that in fourteen years of exile, Laxman never slept for a moment. He was eager to serve and protect Shree Ram and Sitaji for all the days and all the nights. He is renowned for his steadfast loyalty and support of his brother. To live life like him, one should be loyal and supportive of their loved ones. One should also be willing to put loved one's needs before their own and serve them with love and compassion. Laxman, as an uncle, played a vital part in the upbringing of Lava and Kusha too. He taught them how to be disciplined and obedient, and how to live a life of selflessness and service. To be a good parent like Laxman, one should be a role model and guide their children.

नाहं जानामि केयूरे, नाहं जानामि कुण्डले।

नूपुरे त्वभिजानामि नित्यं पादाभिवन्दनात्।।

(Valmiki Ramayan 4.6.22-23)

O Lord, I neither know Mother Sita's bracelets nor recognize her earrings. I only recognize the anklets that used to be at her feet. Because when I worship the feet of Mother Sita my vision is always at her feet (Valmiki Ramayan 4.6.22-23). Laxman replied when Shree Ram showed him Mother Sita's ornaments. Laxman was unaware of any jewellery other than anklets. He recognized anklets only. Lakshman used to bow down to Ram and Sitaji's feet daily, but he had never seen Sitaji's face or body. When he worshipped Sitaji's feet, his eyes always remained on her feet, so he recognized only the anklets. This was the vision of Laxman's dignity. Despite living with them, the man did not even look at her face (Sitaji, his brother's wife). Hearing these words from Laxman, tears started flowing from Shree Ram's eyes, and he hugged Laxman with pride for his act of dignity. In our Sanatan dharma sister-in-law has been given the place of



mother and additionally, it has been reported that brother-in-law is like the son to sister-in-law. Lakshman and Sitaji also followed this ideal, and whenever Shree Ram gave any order against Mother Sita, Lakshman countered Shree Ram by taking the side of Sitaji like a son.

Lesson: The dignity of a relationship is not only about knowledge of right and wrong but, it should be in conduct too. Lakshman proved it with the purity of his mind and his daily activities. We also teach our children this lesson about the dignity of Lakshman and help them understand the value of every relationship.

Bharat: Bharat was Shree Ram's younger brother who refused to become king in Ram's absence and took care of his duties until Ram returned from exile. While Kaikeyi, his mother, was implementing her plan to expel Shree Ram from the kingdom and make Bharat the king of Ayodhya, Bharat was away at his maternal uncle's house. Upon his return, he found that he was crowned king, his stepbrother Ram was gone in the forest and his grief-stricken father was dead. Bharat was in a state of shock. After finishing the last ritual of his father, Bharat rushed to the Chitrakoot forest where Ram was staying, fell at his feet, and begged him to return to the kingdom. He told Ram that he did not need to fulfil his promise now because their father was no longer. But Ram declined, saying he had to fulfil his late father's wishes. He asked Bharat to return to the kingdom and rule it. However, Bharat was unwilling to do so. He knew the kingdom belonged to Ram.

गतिं खर इवास्वस्य तारक्षस्येव पत्रिणः ।
अनुगंतुं न शक्तिमे गतिं तव महीपते ॥
(Valmiki Ramayan 3.105.6)

O lord of the earth! As a Donkey cannot follow the speed of a horse and a bird cannot follow the pace of Tarkshya (eagle/Garuda); likewise, I cannot follow you (Valmiki Ramayan 3.105.6).

In this shloka of Ramayan, Bharat requests Shree Ram to return to Ayodhya and become king to serve his kingdom. Bharat wants to convey to Shree Ram that he is not eligible to be king. Bharat says to Ram that if their father's wish is his priority, then let Bharat wear saffron clothes and be in the forest for fourteen years but Ram would have to go to Ayodhya and be king for the sake of Ayodhya's people.

Bharat did all this because he never had an interest in becoming king. He had a chance to become king because of his mother. But his Sanskar and devotion to his brother prevented him from doing all this. He had never imagined himself as king; he had just imagined himself as a servant of Ram and Ayodhya. Even after much effort, Ram did not back down from his words, then Bharat asked Shree Ram to give him his Paduka



(sandals or slippers) and he placed them on the royal throne in Shree Ram's honour until he returned from his exile.

It would have been easy for Bharat to accept the kingdom as his own simply. But Bharat never even considered it. He knew a grave injustice had been meted out to his stepbrother Ram, but he did not stand for it. After Shree Ram refused to return, he could have proclaimed himself king until the exile was over. Instead, he placed Shree Ram's sandals on the throne to let everyone know who the real king of Ayodhya was.

Lesson: From the character of Bharat we should learn the value of sacrifice. If Bharat has accepted to become king, the whole world will curse him like his mother, Kaikeyi. It is important to convey to our kids that they will experience numerous material temptations throughout their lives. From Bharat, they can learn sacrifice and understand that doing what is right is more important than being lured by unfair offers.

Lava and Kusha: Lava and Kusha were Lord Ram's sons who were brave and courageous warriors. Lava and Kusha were taught different skills by sage Vishwamitra and Sitaji.

ददौ सहप्रमं काकुत्स्थो बालयोर्वै पृथक् पृथक् ।
दियामानं सुवर्णं तु नागृहीतां कुशीलवौ ॥
उच्चतुश्च महात्मानौ किमनेनेति विस्मितौ ॥
वन्येन फलमूलेन निरतौ वनवासिनौ ।
सुवर्णेन हिरण्येन किं करिष्यावहे वने ॥

(Valmiki Ramayan 7.94.19-21)

After getting permission, Bharat started giving different gold coins to both boys. Lava and Kusha did not accept the gold coins given to them. Both brothers were amazed by the need for this money. We are forest dwellers. We used to love wild fruit and roots. What would we do by taking gold-silver to the forest? (Valmiki Ramayan 7.94.19-21).

These were the words of Lava and Kusha when he offered gold coins to each of them in return for the horse of Ashwamegh yagya, which they kept. The teachings of Sitaji and Sage Valmiki led them to this answer. They said they were singing to please Prabhu Shree Ram and the people of Ayodhya, expecting nothing in return. But these days, numerous so-called preachers used to take lakhs for preaching. While there was Ashwamegh yagya going on in Ayodhya, they kept the horse of Ashwamegh Yagya, despite knowing that if they had kept it they would have had to fight with many great warriors of that time, and they did not step back. No one dared step in the path of the mighty horse; no one dared stop Shree Ram, but these tiny warriors did it. Battle lines were drawn and the mighty king, who could defeat the demon army of Ravan with a bunch of monkeys fighting with sticks, could not beat the two small kids with weapons



and trained soldiers. They fought very bravely with every opponent who came forward to take back the horse.

Lava and Kusha were courageous and disciplined warriors who always put their duty first. Without support from their father, they learned so well. All members of Shree Ram's family and every citizen of Ayodhya felt very proud after realizing that they were Raghukul's true heir. Besides this, they also respected and loved their father, Shree Ram, and his family. After Shree Ram returned from this earth, they also ruled like Shree Ram, every citizen of Ayodhya was very happy. They accurately followed what Ram, Sita, and sage Valmiki taught them. They both were well conscious of the significance of upholding dharma and fulfilling their duties as princes.

Above all these, after knowing that their father was a king and they were wandering in the forest, they did not utter a word against Prabhu Shree Ram and happily accepted their destiny and obeyed Shree Ram for the rest of their life.

Lesson: From the lives of Lava and Kusha, we learn that the teachings of our mother, father, and guru should never go in vain. Their every word should be a command for us. No matter what problem we face or how big our opponents may be, we should face our problem with courage [2].

FINDINGS

Lord Ram epitomized the adherence to dharma, the righteous way of living. Even when faced with immense personal sacrifice, he honoured his father's word and embarked on a 14-year exile. This exemplifies the importance of duty and righteousness in our own lives, urging us to navigate challenges with integrity. Dharma (righteousness) is more important than any divine boon. One who is virtuous, wise, just, and merciful is a true human. Father's command should be one's destiny.

CONCLUSION

To live life like Shree Ram, Laxman, Bharat, Lava and Kusha, one should strive to act morally, be loyal and encouraging of loved ones, be responsible and committed to duties, and be brave in the face of challenges. Shree Ram, Laxman, Bharat Lava and Kusha provide valuable lessons. To be a good parent like them, one must set an example for their children by carrying out more than merely speaking about or teaching them; one must also live it out and then provide resources and guidance to their offspring. Every parent must nurture their kids with affection and care and instil in them the values of courage, respect, discipline, and deference to elders [2].

REFERENCES

Balkaran, Raj, and A. Walter Dorn. 2012. "Violence in the 'Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa': Just War Criteria in an Ancient Indian Epic." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 3: 659-690. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfs036>.



- Bajpai, Ravi Dutt (2023). Ramayana: The Indian Epic and Its Relevance to Global IR. E-International Relations. ISSN 2053-8626. Aug. [<https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/102239>]. Retrieved on 03.03.2024.
- Bisht, Medha (2019): Kautilya's Arthashastra: Philosophy of Strategy. New York and London
- Narlikar, Amrita, and Aruna Narlikar(2014), Bargaining with a Rising India: Lessons from the Mahabharata, London: Oxford University Press.
- Parashar, Swati (2013), "What war sand 'warbodies' know about international relations." Cambridge Review of International Affairs 26, No. 4: 615-630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.837429>.
- Shahi, Deepshikha (2018), Kautilya and Non-Western IR Theory. Cham: Springer.

Websites

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/important-life-lessons-from-ramayana-prabhu-shriram>
<https://gurukul.org/blog/spirituality/lessons-from-ramayan/>