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INTRODUCTION

The Ramayana of Valmiki needs no introduction to the Indians and it is famous for its wealth of poetic imagery, loftiness of thought and purity of poetic diction. Ramayana is a national ethical code, which has influenced the heritage of arts, literature, culture, religion and social phenomena since the dawn of civilization. It is not only an emotional treasure of Indian life but also an encyclopedia of our composite culture. It deals with all the four values of human life – Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (aesthetic pleasure) and Moksha (salvation). Dharma includes moral, social, cultural and spiritual values, and Artha deals with material or worldly prosperity. Pleasure pertaining to mundane life is Kama, the main aim of which, according to Hindu social ideal, is to maintain the line of one's progeny. Moksha is the ultimate aim of life, through the emancipation of the self from the worldly worries.

Today many nations look upon India for moral and spiritual guidance. The contribution made by the ancient Indian epics and culture has attracted the attention of the whole world. India's cultural heritage is not only one of the most ancient but also one of the most exemplary. From very early times the system of pilgrimage and the custom of listening to the reading of epics and religious literature either at home or in the village centre grew in to an important practice for developing and maintaining cultural integration. A firm faith in an eternal moral order dominates the entire span of Indian philosophy as reflected in Ramayana. It can be seen that spiritual values are the essence of the Indian culture.

1.1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

At the end of the Twentieth century tremendous progress has been witnessed in the scientific and technological fields. Achievements in the fields of communication-skills, space research, nuclear power, biotechnology etc., have contributed to revolutionary changes in human life. But these changes are questioning the very existence of man. The power that has been acquired by man through technological progress is staring at his face questioning his very own existence. ¹ "Man claims, He

has conquered Nature”; but he is faced with the fear of his own annihilation. The world is at present witnessing terrorism, war and hatred. Nations compete with each other in the production of destructive weapons. If things go on at this rate “the world may be reduced to a heap of ashes” by the indiscriminate use of destructive weapons. This is the social threat that we face today. The compassion, universal love, willingness to sacrifice for others and tolerance are the only alternatives for the survival of mankind in the Twenty-first century.

The pattern of education under foreign rule was unsuitable to the Indian tradition and culture and even after independence this old system of education established by the colonial power continues with very little change. The commercialism and the neocolonialism have contributed to dehumanization at the global level. It is very often said that the educational system prevailing now is not at all suited to the Indian condition and neglects the all-round development of the individual. This system of education is detrimental to the national progress and the cultural development. Lack of spiritual and moral education of the students is considered to be the major cause for the present degeneration of the society.

² “We are at war with ourselves, and therefore at war with one another. Thus the overwhelming and urgent question of the day is; can man recover himself? And it concerns everybody”. Mahatma Gandhi unambiguously stated that without reference to moral and spiritual values no recovery could occur.

Our present educational system is not giving proper weightage to moral and spiritual values of life. The present generation is not fully aware of the basic values of morality. It will be more useful if a study is conducted, about spiritual knowledge and values, which are highly helpful for uplifting social, moral and religious values of the human race. Adhyatma Ramayana is one of the greatest literary works in India, which proclaims the spiritual culture of India and attracted the masses by the values, which it highlights. Ramayana has influenced to get rid of many evils in society and to bring about a social change through ‘Bhakthi movement’. So a study about the Educational Ideas of Adhyatma Ramayana will be useful because the lessons that we learn from this may throw light for solving many of the embarrassing problems that mankind faces today. No comprehensive study has yet been made regarding the Educational Ideas in Ezhuthachan’s

Adhyatma Ramayana, which is considered not only as a standard classical work but also as a rich and authoritative source for spiritual knowledge. Hence the investigator felt the need for conducting this study being intended to throw some light in the area of value-oriented education on the basis of the spiritual contents of Adhyatma Ramayana.

1.2. RAMAYANA - THE ADIKAVYA

The present world is witnessing conflict, hatred, war and miseries. It is highly relevant to find out the ways and means of escape from these threatening situations. Thousands of years back, India has showed the light towards the path of peace and progress as is evident from the following statements.

1. 'Ahimsa Paramo Dharma' meaning that the greatest virtue is non-violence.
2. 'Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu' which contemplates on the welfare of the whole world.
3. 'Ekam Sath Vipra Bahutha Vadanthi' declaring that truth is the same but different scholars define it differently.

4. 'Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam' proclaiming the idea that the world is a family. The peace and progress of the humanity can be achieved only by following a path of life based on these principles.

Accordingly people look up to great men who are role models, representing the qualities embodied in these principles. Heroes of India are not warlords, but those who demonstrated the qualities mentioned above. Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavira in the past, and Mahatma Gandhi, Sreeramakrishna and Aurobindo in contemporary society are some among such souls who have transmitted the message of Indian values through their own lives. Of these Rama is considered foremost among because he is the very embodiment of Dharma ('Rama vigrahavan Dharma').

³ The ancient Indian epic Ramayana is considered as Adikavya (the first literary creation) and the author Valmiki as Adikavi (the first poet). Ramakatha (the story of Rama) has become not only a part of the tradition of Indian antiquity, but also a part and parcel of Indian culture. The aesthetic beauty of this epic has paved the way for the origin of social values.

⁴The story of Rama has been sung by different poets in diverse

tunes and ways in all the important vernacular tongues of India and outside. Long back the story of Rama has reached the people of Srilanka, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, Japan, Cambodia, Burma and Malaysia apart from India. Buddhism and Jainism have utilized the ideals in Ramayana to build up their ideology of life. This perhaps throws some light on the greatness of Ramakatha.

Valmiki Ramayana consists of seven kandas or parts, which include about twenty four thousand slokas (stanzas). In accordance with the time, place and taste of the people, many poets have re-shaped it. After Valmiki Ramayana, many Ramayanas have been written. Adhyatma Ramayana, Vasishta Ramayana, Kamba Ramayana, Thulaseedas Ramayana, Atbutha Ramayana, Ananda Ramayana, Bala Ramayana, Gayathri Ramayana etc. are some among them. But there is no doubt about the fact that Valmiki Ramayana serves as the basis for all other Ramayanas. Among these Adhyatma Ramayana comes closer to Valmiki Ramayana.

The tremendous growth in Vaishnava and Saiva sects during the 12th century and the propagation of 'Rama Bhakthi Movement' during the 14th century have stimulated the growth

of Bhakthi Movement in India. ⁵During the 12th century itself Kambar had written Ramayana in Tamil. During the 15th century Kritivasa Ramayana was written in the Vanga language and during the 16th century Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan wrote the Adhyatma Ramayana in Malayalam. Tulasidas wrote Ramacharithamanasa in Hindi and Thurave Ramayana was composed by Kumara Valmiki.

1.3. ADHYATMA RAMAYANA

Adhyatma Ramayana was composed for highlighting the spiritual aspect in Valmiki Ramayana. Some are of the opinion that Adhyatma Ramayana was written by Vyasa. The composition of Adhyatma Ramayana is attributed to various other great souls also such as Viswamithra, Vidyaranya swami, Vararuchi and a Telugu Brahmin. Some even believe that Ramanand is the author of this epic.

Adhyatma Ramayana is a complete scientific, vedantic book-which comprises all the basics in Vedanta. The unification of Bhakthi, Knowledge and Karma can be seen in this book. It is a masterpiece of Advaita vision. It is believed that not only human beings but also animals get liberation

(Mukthi) by hearing the recitation of Ramayana. Rama is depicted as an ideal man in Valmiki Ramayana, whereas in Adhyatma Ramayana he is depicted as Parabrahman (the ultimate Reality) in the form of man. It depicts Sita as Maya or sakthi and Rama as Paramatma. Thus a vedantic touch is given in the narration of the story of Rama in Adhyatma Ramayana.

1.4. ADHYATMA RAMAYANAM – KILIPPATTU

Kannassa Panikker, Keralavarma Raja and many others have narrated the Ramakatha in Malayalam apart from Ezhuthachan. ⁶But the widely accepted version of Ramakatha in Kerala is the Adhyatma Ramayana of Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan. It has played a vital role in reviving the spiritual values of the Keralites. The aim of Ezhuthachan was not only to present the story of Rama in his own language and style but also to attract the attention of the public towards the significance of this spiritual reality to enable them to attain salvation (Moksha). Adhyatma Ramayana has been considered as the holy book of Keralites worthy of being recited daily as compared to Quran of Muslims and Bible of Christians. Even before the invention of printing, Adhyatma Ramayana had won

great renown and circulation in Kerala through palm-leaf scripts.

Adhyatma Ramayana is the trans-creation of the work of a book of the same name in Sanskrit. Critics and historians do admit that this work is more than a translation of the Sanskrit version. It is divided into six kandas or sections. These are the Balakanda, the Ayodhyakanda, the Aranyakanda, the Kishkindakanda, the Sundarakanda and the Yuddhakanda. The six kandas in total are again divided into 118 subsections. These 118 sub sections expose the spiritual and temporal basis of the story of Sree Rama, the embodiment of Dharma.

1.5. THUNCHATH RAMANUJAN EZHUTHACHAN

Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan generally known as Ezhuthachan, the legendary poet of Kerala is known also as the father of Malayalam language and literature. He has opened a new style and venue for Malayalam language and literature by adopting a novel way in the format of language, diction and thought. Ezhuthachan tried to express the Advaita philosophy through his aesthetic utterances. It is the usual practice that these aesthetic utterances of Ezhuthachan are

read with reverence and devotion when death robs the pleasurable moments of human existence.

Despite the monumental place Ezhuthachan occupies in Kerala's life, very few facts are known about his life. His name, period and the works - all are a matter of dispute. ^{7,8}It is generally agreed that he lived sometime between 1425 and 1625 AD as stated by Sahitya Panchananan P.K. Narayanapillai and Ulloor S.Parameswaraiyar. ⁹The generally accepted name is Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan and he was born in a non-Brahmin family. Ezhuthachan has introduced a new style of writing poetry in Malayalam and this is known as Kilippattu. His birthplace is believed to be Thunchanparamba in Trikandiyoor of Malappuram district. Apart from Adhyatma Ramayana Ezhuthachan has been credited with the authorship of Mahabharatham Kilippattu, Bhagavatham Kilippattu, Uthara Ramayanam Kilippattu, Brahmandapuram, Harinama-keerthanam, Devimahatmyam, Chintharatnam, and Sathamukha Ramayanam.

Ezhuthachan through his compositions has not only created an awareness of spiritualism but also a salient social change. In those days Brahmins alone were competent to learn

Vedas. Non-brahmins were denied higher learning especially Vedas and Sastras. Untouchability and social segregation were the evils in those days. The present Malappuram District where Ezhuthachan was born was part of the kingdom of the Zamorin of Calicut. The Brahmin priests directed and instructed the rulers what to do and what not to do. The basic rights of a large number of non-brahmins were denied. It was very often quoted that a learned Sudra should be despised and kept at a distance. 'Sudramakshara samyuktham Duratha Parivarjayeth'. Ezhuthachan through his composition and through the authoritative interpretation of Vedic and puranic texts challenged this system and spread the idea that the caste is not a logical reality. Some quotations from his works such as those quoted below prove this fact.

1. 'Qualities are not associated with caste and name'^(Ap-1.1)

(Wise men are of opinion that quality is not to be assessed on the basis of caste or titles. Code of ethics states that the permanent virtue of rulers is the protection of those who have surrendered.)

2. 'There is no need to enquire about the origin of great men'.

So Ezhuthachan like the traditional teachers and gurus of India such as Valmiki, Vedavyasa, Kambar and Sankara is not only a poet but an accepted teacher of the society who strived for social justice through value- oriented non-formal spiritual education.

1.6. THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Education is increasingly perceived as a significant process of transforming the dream of millions of human beings for a better and higher quality of life. It is an aggregate of all the processes by which a person develops his abilities, attitudes, values and other forms of behaviours, which help to attain social competency. Refined, honest and socially efficient citizens are the products of any good educational system. Education should include not only the training of the intellect but also the refinement of the heart and disciplining of the spirit. Education should provide help for the liberation of the individual from ignorance and oppression. The educational aims and objectives should not be limited to a particular

country or a nation. According to Indian tradition Education is not merely for earning a living; it is the initiation into a life of enlightenment, training of an individual in the pursuit of truth and practice of virtue. In fact education should help for the all-round development of the personality.

Purification of mind by eliminating the undesirable tendencies and developing the desirable qualities thereby uplifting the mind to a higher level of detachment may result in attaining self-realisation which is otherwise known as emancipation or Mukti.

According to ¹⁰Mahatma Gandhi, Education means all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind and spirit

¹¹Altekar (1944) says “Education is regarded as a source of illumination and Power which transforms and enables one’s nature by the progressive and harmonious development of physical, mental and spiritual powers of the individual”. Above all it is for the transformation of the individual in the endless pursuit of excellence and perfection. ¹²Tirtha (1964) observes that education has an accelerating role. It refines sensitivities,

and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit.

According to ¹³Socrates, “Education means the bringing out of the ideas of Universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man”.

¹⁴Plato is of opinion that Education is acquiring knowledge for the good of the individual and for the safety of the state. Thus Plato reaffirms in the laws. ¹⁵“If you ask what is the good of education in general, the answer is easy – that education makes good men, and those good men who act nobly and conquer their enemies in battle. Education certainly gives victory, although victory sometimes produces forgetfulness of education; for many have grown insolent from victory in war, and this insolence has created in them innumerable evils, and many a victory has been and will be suicidal to the victors, but education is never suicidal”.

¹⁶Rousseau, counsels us to live according to Nature, and education to follow the order of Nature. He is of opinion that everybody is born innocent but the society corrupts; so an individual has to live according to the Nature. He also states

“man is born free but everywhere he is in chains”. When Rousseau says “education comes to us from nature, from men or from things,” he is regarding Nature as equivalent to ‘endowment’-the inherited dispositions and capacities of the individual. Before our innate tendencies are warped by our prejudices, they are what Rousseau terms ‘Nature’. According to Aristotle, Nature is something beyond our control.

Dewey has the concept of the good man of Plato, and the innocent man of Rousseau. The socially efficient individual as advocated by Dewey and the Universal man with kindness and love as described by Comenius and a Man with an all-round development of personality as stated by Mahatma Gandhi – all point out to the necessity of a complete education for the total development of man. It is very interesting to note that this is almost the same concept specifically described in Adhyatma Ramayana.

1.7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIFE, EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

Education is intended for leading a successful life, for which the all-round development of individual is essential. Development of personality starts from the formation of self-concept. As the personality develops the ego decreases as a result of self-analysis and self-evaluation. Ultimately the perfect development of personality results in the destruction of ego and identification of the individual with the universe. This is exactly what is meant by self-realisation as enunciated by Vedantic philosophers (Ap-1.2). In other words, the Advaita as expounded by Sree Sankara, defines self-realization as the identification of the self with the ultimate truth or 'Brahman'. This is what is meant by self-realisation. Adhyatma Ramayana very clearly states that the aim of life is to achieve this goal. As a member of society man has certain duties. The fulfillment of these duties is the responsibility of any individual. These duties are known as 'Dharma'. Dharma is really the truth in action. Truth realised intellectually is known as Jnana (gyan) or knowledge and the truth in action for the welfare of the society is known as Dharma. Both are complementary and

supplementary. Ramayana clearly states that the world is the manifestation of Brahman or the ultimate truth. If an individual is to be happy the whole world should be happy. Any action causing pain or destruction to the other living beings or disturbing the natural ecosystem of the world will be harmful to the individual. Ahimsa is the greatest virtue and basis for the happiness of the whole world. On this basis we can understand that the whole world can be considered as a family.

Man is happy only in a society based on Dharma. Compassion, love, self-sacrifice and humility are some of the essential characteristics of an individual who has been properly educated. The role of education from this point of view is to enlighten the individual regarding the Truth and Dharma. According to the Indian tradition Dharma is the basic value, which one should acquire during his studentship. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha are the basic values of Indian tradition. Artha, Kama and Moksha are to be based on Dharma. Education is a process to enable one to achieve these values by following Dharma.

1.8. RELEVANCE OF RAMAYANA IN THE EDUCATION OF THE PRESENT WORLD

As already stated, Adhyatma Ramayana is the most celebrated work of the legendary poet Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan in Malayalam. It occupies a unique place in the horizon of Malayalam language and literature for its literary merit. Apart from its literary excellence, it has got its own unique social, religious and philosophical values, which may give solutions for many of the embarrassing problems that humanity faces today.

Messages of Adhyatma Ramayana are universal love, compassion, willingness to sacrifice for others, tolerance and to follow the path of Dharma. These qualities are highly helpful for the social, moral and religious uplift of the entire human race.

It is the usual practice in Kerala to read with all devotion Adhyatma Ramayana every day in the evening along with prayer for spiritual guidance and material progress. A complete month in the Malayalam year namely Karkadakam, is used for the continuous recitation of Ramayana. During the 'Ekadashi Thithi' Ramayana is read continuously for three days

concluding with the worship of Rama. In short Adhyatma Ramayana is the Veda for Malayalies who depend upon its content for material and spiritual progress and guidance in life. The importance of Adhyatma Ramayana is mentioned in its introduction as the discussion between Lord Mahesa and the Universal mother under the title Uma Maheswara Samvada. Here Uma, the Universal mother or prakrithi requests Lord Mahesa, who is the all-knowing guru and her sweet heart, to enlighten her about the essence of the godhood of Rama so as to understand the different schools of philosophy starting from Samkhya and also to attain perfection because realising the truth regarding Rama will enlighten one to attain self-realisation.^(Ap-1.3)

In short Maheswari states that her knowledge will not be complete unless she learns the Ramayana. Lord Mahesa replies that nobody else had asked this question to him and even her desire to know about it shows that she is blessed. He mentions that Rama is not an individual, but the 'Brahman' himself, the embodiment of love, kindness, bliss and enlightenment. He is the only reality and quotes the conversation between Sita Devi and Hanuman. Sita Devi

illustrates the secret of Rama to her most beloved devotee, Hanuman at the direction of Sree Rama. She very specifically states that Rama is but Brahman himself and she was actually the Maya or Prakriti. The whole universe is but the illusion of the eternal reality, the Brahman. This introduction illustrates Brahman in a concrete way. Since Brahman is the eternal reality, the proper knowledge of Ramayana will lead one to the realisation of the ultimate reality thereby getting liberated from one's ignorance. Accordingly the aim of education namely, self-realisation can be achieved by learning Ramayana. So Adhyatma Ramayana is not only a purana but also an ideal guide for the attainment of Moksha. Educationists rarely understand the importance of Ramayana as an educational text. The purpose of this study is just to point out the salient principles of education mentioned in it. A comprehensive treatment of Adhyatma Ramayana from this point of view is beyond the scope of this study.

1.9. TITLE OF THE STUDY

The present study is entitled:

EDUCATIONAL IDEAS IN ADHYATMA RAMAYANA

1.10. DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

Education

Education is a process of the all-round development of the individual resulting in self-realisation, which liberates the individual from Avidya or ignorance and lifts him to eternal bliss.

Idea

Idea means that which exists in the mind as a concept and it may be a mental image or formulation of something seen or known or a pure abstraction or something assumed or sensed.

Educational Ideas

‘Educational Ideas’ means the ideas related to education. The term Educational idea is used to represent the concept and thoughts related to education. Educational philosophy,

Educational sociology and Educational psychology together contribute to the basic principles of Education. The term educational ideas relate to the aim, content, method and approach of education and the teacher-pupil relationship. The relevance of the concepts of Adhyatma Ramayana and its implications on the above educational ideas are coming under the purview of this study.

1.11. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is designed with the following objectives:

1. To study the concept of formal, non-formal and informal aspects of education as revealed in Adhyatma Ramayana
2. To find out the concept of education in Adhyatma Ramayana with reference to
 - a. Aim
 - b. Content
 - c. Method and
 - d. Teacher-pupil relationship
3. To study the sociological significance of education as depicted in Adhyatma Ramayana

4. To study the relationship between spiritual and temporal objectives and related practices of education as envisaged in Adhyatma Ramayana
5. To identify the relevant principles and practices adopted in Adhyatma Ramayana, applicable to modern educational system for national integration, international understanding and peace.

1.12. METHODS OF PROCEDURE

An analytical descriptive approach is mainly followed in the study because the present study is intended to shed light on the Educational ideas in Adhyatma Ramayana of Ezhuthachan.

1.13. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study intends to present comprehensively the Educational Ideas in Adhyatma Ramayana within the range of the objectives already stated. It is expected that the conclusions of this investigation will be helpful to put forward

specific suggestions applicable to the contemporary system of education.

The study is reported in five chapters as indicated below.

- Chapter 1 - Introduction
- Chapter II - Survey of Related Literature
- Chapter III - Methodology
- Chapter IV - Analysis and Interpretation
- Chapter V - Discussion and Conclusion

1.14. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Adhyatma Ramayana is a total description of the practical Vedanta in the form of a story. As such it is not only a philosophical treatment but also a treasure of educational principles and practice. There are direct formal statements and indirect passages regarding education and adjustment problems of different types of personalities. The uniqueness of Adhyatma Ramayana, as compared with other Ramayanas with regard to educational concepts, is another area. To study Ramayana from all these points of view is beyond the scope of this research study, because it requires more time, resource and participation of many scholars in the field. So the

investigation is being limited mainly to the study of the implications of Adhyatma Ramayana with regard to the objectives stated earlier.

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