CHAPTER 8

THE APPLICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SECULAR VALUES OF RAMAYANA

1. THE APPLICATION OF THE SECULAR VALUES OF RAMAYANA TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECULAR VALUES OF MODERN INDIAN SOCIETY

We find, Maharshi Valmiki, describing the great reception to Sri Rama, as he arrives, with Sita and Lakshmana, accompanied with him, in the dense forest of Dandaka. The sages of the hermitages, chanting the Vedic hymns¹ of honouring Rama with traditional rites, with great delight, and magnanimous affection, say to Rama, "The king being the protector of righteousness and also the resort for these people, famous, revered, and respectable holder of the Staff of Justice, worshipful, and the fourth part of Indra, himself, protects the subjects, O son of Raghu!" It is hence, that the king, who is saluted by all, enjoys the foremost delightful pleasures, we being the residents of your kingdom deserve protection from you. Whether staying in the City or in the forest, you, the Lord of people, are our King.² Having given up punishment, controlled danger, and conquered the senses and having the wealth of asceticism, we should always be protected by you,
Maharshi Valmiki brings home to us, the readers, how the sages maintained the socio-cultural honour accorded to Rama, in accordance with the customs of the Indian Society. We learn here the best teachings of Valmiki, to the benefit of educating all Indians, how a guest is rightly and devotionally honoured and here the guest is none other than, the King of Ayodhya, and he, Sri Rama has chosen to obey his dearest father's wishes, in coming to the forests, abandoning the Kingship and leaving the pompous kingdom, only to show, how very dedicated he is to his father and his strict obedience to carry out the wishes of his beloved father. The sages also say, as we find in the sloka:

mangalāni prayunjāna muda paramaya yutaḥ,
Mūlam pusaṃ phalaṃ Sarvanāśrūman ca mahātmamah. 17
Nivedayitva dharmajnaste tu Prānjalayobhrvan,
Dharma pālo Janasyasya Sarvyasya mānvyasyaḥ. 18
Pujantīram mānyaḥca rāja dundahirō guruḥuḥ,
Indrasyāna ca chaturbhagah Praja Ṛakṣati Rāgahah. 19.
It is very much clear to all of us, the Indians, the
culture of the people is to maintain the relationship
as very cordial, when the head of the state visits you,
from even the farthest place of the Kingdom; you have to
extend the warmest welcome, expressing all affection,
from the people want the king to feel protected, as the
king owes a duty to the people, in all righteousness. A critical examination of the statement of the sages
to the King, now in exile, in the thick forests, throws
light on the socio-political allegiance by the people
to the King, who is no longer ruling the kingdom and
who has come on exile for a pretty long period of four-
teen years, a deep thinking into the situation will
also present us a presumption that the people, who are
to be protected by the King of the land, is now vir-
tually to be accorded all sympathy and the guest treat-
ment. We can very well understand, the plight of the
King, away, from his kingdom, unattended to and unposse-
ssed by the royal pomp and peagentry. This really
presents us the unqualified social temperament and the
degree of culture-possessed by the subjects of the king-
dom. Do we say, the king, the guest is totally at the
mercy of his own subjects, to receive all hospitality. I would say, no, the guest, the king is not at the verge of receiving all mercy, but it is purely the Indian quality of socio-cultural qualification, characteristic of the traditional custom of the people.

Infinite is SriRama, countless are His virtues and endless is the extension of His stores.7 We find from this quotation, how Thulasidas describes, Rama, as the Infinite, with countless virtues, and his deeds having extended by leaps and bounds. Thulasidas is exactly right in having described Rama as the Infinite, because by birth in this human world, Rama is a human being, born in the royal family as the son of Dasaratha, but Ramais God, incarnate, having taken the human birth, to establish Dharma,8 and to punish the wicked and to protect the virtuous. Rama is far, more than the qualification be possessed. The countless virtues that Sri Rama possessed, can never be born by anybody and his deeds having extended by leaps and bounds.9
Thulasidas, the Ballard writer, has taken all care to give the title to Sri Rama as the Infinite. He knew, from his Intuition that Rama is the God, incarnate and his description saying, Rama, the Adarsha purusha, with all virtues, perfected in him and his deeds, green in every body's memory Thulasidas has attributed the personality of Rama, as everyman's idol, for worship and dedicated to everpraising and all his deeds characterised as socio-cultured treasures, for the good of the Society and growthth of culture. The socio-cultured background of Ramayana is many faceted, in respect of the welfare of the society in general and the individual, in particular. This aspect is very much appreciable because, it is highly noteworthy, that the greatest God of the greatest number of people becomes universal in its application. Even if it involves in sacrificing of one's life, it needs, no comment because it is for the good of many and many more people despite the fact, it involves doing away with the life of another, when it is critically said to be a wicked character, indulging in the act of doing greatest harm by killing, innocent lives, without reason.

Sri Rama and Lakshmana kill the wicked and most dreaded Rakshas, by name Viradha, thus bring the menace
and the worst havoc committed by the Rakshasa, Vuradha\textsuperscript{10} to an end. This is an act of protection to numerous sages, and countless people inhabitants, in Dandakaranya. This clearly tells us, how Rama has poised to do good to the mendicants, thus saving them from the dread of the demon\textsuperscript{11}. As Sri Rama approaches the hermitage of sage Sarabhangha, Indra, the God of Angels looks at Sri Rama and says as follows: "Here comes this Rama; before he speaks to me, I make a move, let him not see me. Shortly, when he has conquered Ravana, the King of Sri Lanka, and achieved his purpose, then I shall see him. For, he has to do a great deed which is very difficult to be done by others."\textsuperscript{12} This quotation of Indra, the God of Angels catches our attention very much and tells us, what is the purpose of the incarnation of Rama, as this Earth. It draws our attention to the duty, bound to the Nation as a whole, and to the society in particular. Duty bound, Sri Rama has to kill Ravana the King of Sri Lanka, for all his mis-deeds, in abducting Sita, in the absence of Sri Rama. Here, we find very clearly, it is predestined that Sri Rama will perform the social obligation to the people, in performing the righteous duties, to uphold the tenets of the society and for the well-being of
the people, who are his subjects. We find, that the mission of Sri Rama is to the Secular development of the land, of which he is the crowned King; and the duty of righteousness is well within the secular development of the land as a whole, for its socio-cultural developments.

As Rama enters Aranya of Dandaka, he asks the sages present there, to go to Agastya Ashrama and in this connection we can know the statement made by Rama. He says, "I have heard from these talking among themselves, that Agastya, the foremost of sages; there exists a great desire in my heart that I should get an opportunity to salute the sage, Agastya, along with my younger brother, Lakshmana and my wife Sita, for obtaining his grace, so that I may personally do some service, also to that great sage." Here we find, that Rama wants to do some service to the sages, in the forest. When he himself is in need of service, from the hermitage, he is ready to do any service to the sages. This evidently shows; how, quote: "For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doors, and for establishing Dharma on a firm footing. I am born
from age to age." Here, every time, includes, where and how, the God, incarnates and how He serves people in the larger interest of their welfare. We find the selfless Rama, offering his services, a loneself without the least expectation of anything in return. Here we find the most magnanimous attitude of Sri Rama, to serve people, irrespective of their position. The Lord, through His, divine interference or descent apparently comes down to solve a topical problem of the age, the main aim being to leave behind eternal solutions. The vast universe, with its infinite variety and multiplicity was created by God, the Supreme, and in order to sustain and maintain it in rhythm and harmony. He has blessed humanity, with certain eternal and universal laws for the welfare of all living beings. God blesses the humanity for the Welfare of all beings. The practice of divine qualities has been emphasized in the Gita. In Gita, Lord Krishna says, "The God - realised person is far from malice, friendly, compassionate, forgiving, content, united to God, having control over everybody, mind, senses, and a firm resolve, free from egoism, delight, anger, perturbation and fear, pure, clever, impartial, neither annoys, nor feels offended, neither rejoices, nor hates nor grieves nor desires, without attachment and full of devotion." -
Here we can attribute all these qualities, very much characteristic, to Sri Rama, because he has come to this world as a human being, to protect the virtuous and to punish the wicked, but he is God incarnation on Earth. He, therefore, offers his ready services, to help the needy and the deserving. We can say, the ethics of Gita is based on sound metaphysics. The message of Gita, as we study and understand, is universally comprehensive and everlasting. We can safely say, the Gita which can faithfully serve as best principle treasure elements and guide lines to man of many society and any age. Rama, as a human being, has offered his best services to help the hermitage from all violence and this secular aspect from the conduct of Rama tells us to practise secularism, in all entirety, because it involves, as a duty of every body to every otherbody, preaching universal secularism.

In the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi, Sarvodaya, the God of everybody, which was the ideal of Ramarajya, It is the all round development of everybody. Its aim is the establishment of society, in which every individual, religion, language, and literature is to get
unhindered, unstunted progress, in all respects.

With this background of social welfare of every individual, secular values of Indian Society, in connection with the development of Indian secularism. Before I deal this value of secular values of Indian Society, I write to say, Life forces us to make choices to measure things, as better of worse and thus formulate some standards, or values Axiology, derived from the Greek, axias, means "worthy ", can be used by all people of the society, for the study of Values, including, the origin, the nature, the classification and the place of the said values in the world. We do study, Ethics, to study values in human conduct and we also study Aesthetics to study the values in Art, and Arts, in general, Edgar S. Brightman, says, that, 19 " in the most elementary sense, value means, whatever is actually liked, prized, esteemed, desired, approved or enjoyed by anyone, at anytime. It is the actual experience of enjoying a desired object or activity. Hence value is an existing realisation of desire 20 Yet another definition by Dorothy Lac, " By human values, by a Value or a system of values, I mean the basis upon which as individual will choose one course rather than
another, judged as better or worse, right or wrong; we find, the desire and approval of a value and at the same time we have, values as objective and as subjective also. We do not stop at this, and try to know, about higher values, leading to supreme values, which determine the organisation of the world. Truth, Righteousness are the Supreme values and we refer to Justice as higher Value of human life, as distinct from the art of Justice, in the animal Kingdom.

As we study the application of the socio-cultural background of the teachings of Ramayana, for the development of the secular values of Indian Society, it can be said it is manifold. The overall picture that we get of the teachings of the socio-cultural background is of three distinctly constrained social characters, namely, the Satvic, in Ayodhya, the Satvic, and Majestic in Kishkinda, and Tasmic and Rajasic in Lanka. We see the cardinal principle of Ayodhya in all its pedigree and at the sametime, adharma is the ruling principle of the uncivilised society. These characters are well brought up by Valmiki, as a Manava in the
north Kingdom, in the peninsula and a Rakshasa in the island, Sri Lanka. We have thesis and antithesis of the epic, in both the personalities of Sri Rama and Ravana. To apply this thesis of promotion of friendship and the doctrine of service to the Master, we have the Deva Vanara combination, in vanquishing the evil and to establish the triumph of good over evil, of the supremacy of Dharma there is synthesis of virtue, friendship, amity and servitude in the real sense, which Valmiki masters, in great comparative co-ordination and unstinted co-operation. We learn from this literary masterpiece of the epic, by the Aadikavi, Valmiki, as an exemplar, for our Indian society of the Aryans and Dravidians of Bharathvarsha, project the socio-cultural teachings, to be followed and practised by the present day Indian Society. We have many literary and philosophical graces, like suitable personalities, apt images felicitous expressions, charming humour, and delightful descriptions, most suited to the events and circumstances.

Volumes can be summarised from the Aadikavya, Ramayana, by the Aadikavi, Valmiki, to high light the unique presentation of the invaluable socio-cultural teachings, which do help us to inculcate our, Indian
Society of secular temperament. We have sublime thoughts given to us, in the epic, to raise our Indian secular thoughts and widen our socio-cultural standards, by way of gradual practice of the teachings of the epic; the most descriptive situations of the epic would furnish enough light to illumise our social set up of life and to imbibe better culture, suited to our present Indian Society, which is now at the cross roads; The epic also brings home to our understanding that the birds and the beasts of the sky and the forest, respectively do their little, sincere service and unqualified help to the hero and the heroine of the epic. We have a clear, distinct, proper perception of the most likeable and compassionate characters, so artistically delineated by the Aadikavi, Valmiki that would definitely influence our secular thoughts and social ideals of our Indian Society and the practice of the teachings in the epic would definitely influence our customs and practices and to mend our Indian society, depending upon our Indian Social norms. The ennobling aspects of the teachings of Ramayana would certainly uplift the trend of the Indian Society, even in the wicked,
vexatious and nerve-racking present days of the closing of the Twentieth Century.

We have in these days, the one family norm, with one wife and two children, leading to the social happiness and to the economic balance of the present Indian Society confronted with, wicked practices and communal hatred, in spite of the fact, we, the Indians of this country, are very much committed to exemplary secular standards when compared to the worst riot torn ethnic problems, tearing us so widely, with utter disregard to our valuable practice of secularism, saying "ServejaneSukino Bavanahu"25

We have a scene of simplicity and modesty, when Rama, during the period of exile in the forest, lived in a simple way, thus, exemplifying his flexibility to simplicity26Sri Rama tells his younger brother, Lakshmana, as follows, "gentle brother, this is the region of Panchavati, with woodlands, in blossom. Since you are a man of insight, cast as eye all around in the forest and the place of the hermitage, be acceptable to us, where there is beauty of forest and beauty
of water." A prince he was, Sri Rama and a king to be crowned, but he has come to the forest to obey and to follow, in strict parlance, his father's words, to go on exile for long during which period he will have nothing to do, with his crown prince rights, but to return to his kingdom, at the end of the 14th year, now clearly tells us the most noble modesty of Sri Rama, who loves to be as simple as a commoner, thus portraying the real secular character and practice of modesty. The spirit of secularism is quite evident here, to be appreciated in full measure, letter and spirit, and to be copied by the future generation, we learn a lot from the sincere modesty and the secular spirit to the core. Besides the stay of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in a newly built simple hermitage, all the three start living, their forest life. True to the friendly nature of Sri Rama, he takes the new friendship of a huge bird, by name Jatayu and it lives with them, with all confidence and to be benefitted very much, by its stay, with the three great personalities. We have a very potential relationship, here, with the huge bird, Jatayu, and the great affinity of Sri Rama to Lakshmana, whom he addresses, as follows: "I am pleased with you, O, powerful brother, you have accomplished this great work of building
a beautiful hermitage and as a reward I give you a
well-deserved embrace." Valmiki writes thus, "The
happy Raghava, the promoter of others grandeur,

   stayed, in that hermitage, attended upon by Sita and

Lakshmana, that righteous prince stayed for some period

   like a "God in Heaven". Valmiki writes to say, the God

of heaven, Sri Rama, who has incarnated on earth, as

Sri Rama, the King of Ayodhya. This hermitage life of

Sri Rama, with Sita and Lakshmana, immediately tells us,

that they all the three identify themselves with the

fellowman of the region and live in simple austerity,

without the least thinking of royal living, with pomp

   and peagentry, in his Kingdom, in Ayodhya. This direct

picture of the forest life, open to air, presents to

us, the common people, the great sacrifice done by Rama,

in honouring his father's words, and not asking for

fortunes of royal pedigree tells us the socio-cultural

effect of the hermitage life of the three and the friend-

ship with the huge bird, Jatayu, as their best friend,

true to the concept of real friendship, in the society,

leading to very fine secularism. We do learn a very impor-

tant great lesson, both for ourselves and for our future
generation.
As Sri Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, has been spending his journey through the forest, we find Maharshi Valmiki describing the day in the beginning of winter in his words as follows, "With its glory", faintly perceptible in the forenoon and agreeable to the touch at noon, the sunshine, which is partially bright and partially pale is spreading its charm on the earth." Here, the Secular character of the Sun, is throwing, on the whole earth, only to show the secular character of the Sun, as he and his rays spread light to the entire universe, allowing to be enjoyed by every creature. As Nature shows us the way, the principle and cultural practice, as a lesson, the human character should imprint in its mind, the universal factor of secularism and its application to every living being on Earth. So, Nature shows and teaches us the lessons in secularism to be preached and practised to the entirety of our wisdom.

We have in the descriptive slokas of Valmiki Maharshi, the spirit of secular character, in the high souled Bharata. In the words of Sri Rama to Lakshmana, we understand as follows: "Dear Brother, Kaikeyi, (our second mother) should never be condemned by you (Lakshman)
speak exclusively about that Bharata, the King of
the Ikṣvākus. To be sure my mind is intent on my vow
of residing in the forest alone, and is of firm resolve;
yet being agonised by Bharata's affection, it gets in-
fatuated once more. I fully recollect his agreeable
sweet, affectionate, nectar-like and soul-ravishing
words. When shall I actually be united, with the high
souled, Bharatha30. In the words of Sri Rama, we find,
the most affectionate feelings of Sri Rama for his broth-
Bharatha, the real affection, spoken from the bottom of
his heart, directly presents to us the spirit of brother-
hood, unstinted and unquestionable love for his younger
brother, Bharatha. We find the real sacrifice of Rama,
in favour of his younger Brother, Bharatha, the Kingship
of Ayodhya, which he surrendered to Bharatha, with all
hearty willingness, in accordance to the will of his
father, who was forced to ask Rama to give up his righ-
teous hold to become the King of Ayodhya. This is the
supreme sacrifice by, as elder Brother, in favour of his
younger, Brother, Bharatha, who has no desire at all for
the kingship." -
References:


(2) VALMIKI RAMAYANA, Stanza: 20
Ibid:

(3) Ibid:- Slokas: 21, 651, Book No.III.

(4) VALMIKI RAMAYANA, Original Sanskrit Kavya, Canto:1, Book No.3, Page:650.

(5) Ibid: Sloka-20, Book-III.

(6) SRI RAMACHARITAMANAS, by Tulasidas, P: 229, 'The Story of Rama'.


(8) VALMIKI RAMAYANA, Canto IV, Page: 655, Slokas: 7 and 11.


(12) "SRI RAMA AVATHARA" from "Glory of Rama"
by P.G. Ananthanarayanan, PP: 10-11,
(Chinmaya Mission, Bangalore).

(13) "GLORY OF RAMA",
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(14) THEBAGAVAD GITA - Chapter III - Sloka:4,
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(21) VALMIKI RAMAYANA, Original Sanskrit Kavya, Ayodhya Kanda, Kishkinda Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Books: I, IV & V.
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(22) VALMIKI RAMAYANA, Original Sanskrit Kavya, Books: IV & VI, Kishkinda Kanda and Yudha Kanda, (GITA Press, Gorakpur).


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We have dealt with the importance of secular values and their relation to the Higher values of life, in Chapter - 6.

Now, let us deal with the socio-cultural-religious and philosophical significance of secular values in the epic "Ramayana". Undoubtedly there is very great significance of socio-cultural-religious and philosophical findings of the secular values in this great epic. Many social events, in this ancient epic are significant than the other findings. As we study the society of "Ramayana", we learn the society belongs to the people and the people belong to the society. The Kingdom of Sri Rama was a period of great expansion and of a new political outlook. As we go back to the political History of India, of the erstwhile Kingdom, we find, India was one, inspite of its complexity of different races, followed by different religions too; even different kingdoms and creeds co-existed, showing the solidarity of our country, Bharath of ancient
India, with the era of this world, and the beginning of the Kritha Yuga. We also find such unity, in simple terms existed in another great era, exhibiting the fundamental unity of several kingdoms, under different religions and cultural unity. Indian History, of the past political sovereignty tells us that the land Bharath was one, in its uniqueness of solid oneness, the heroes of those kingdoms maintained peace and political panorama. Bharath, in great unity, despite vast masses of heterogeneous people, at all levels. The ancient stories of Bharath, which people loved were also made the instruments of great religions, revival to forge unity in the country. Our two great epics, namely the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha became the two great final authority in religion. The teachings of the Upanishads were brought to the easy understanding of the masses, besides the ideal characters of the two great epics. The Gods and Goddesses worshipped by the common people were given honoured places in the Hindu pantheon.

The Hindu scheme of life has been expressed by the formula of (1) Dharma, (2) Artha, (3) Kama and (4) Moksha and this was widely preached and practised.
This indicates the ideal of a complete life, taking into consideration that no violence or malice was thought of to any living being on the Earth. Even the code of Manu and the subsequent puranas proclaim the Hindu renaissance. As we look at our life span, the scheme of Life is outlined and we have the domestic virtues glorified and a philosophy of active life has started, eversince Life, human life came into this world, giving rise to the concept of universe, in its applicability. Ideal types of character representing all stages of Life were clothed in the epic grandeur and set before the nation - Here we have to note that, we in India, are the most fortunate to have had the most illustrious characters of Ramayana and Mahabharatha, the great epics of the land, and now those ideals are the best guides to our present generation to lead an enlightened life. To quote the great seers, Mahashies, the ideal King, the chaste wife, the loyal brothers the disciplined student, the virtuous citizen and the faithful servant too. These characters moulded our Hindu society, as Hecpecific characters moulded Hellenic society. We therefore find the abstract truths of the Upanishads became vital forces, presenting to our country, an excellent
picture of civilization, ever sound and exemplary. We therefore find, the formula of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha would have remained only in name, by formula, had it not been exemplified by the epic characters. We find from the words of Lord Sri Krishna that "He appears on the scene to protect the righteousmen, in times of national decadence, that no sin can really pursue a man who has taken refuge in HIM, and that peace comes to the Soul which recognises HIM as 'the Lord of all the worlds, the friend of all beings and the Receptient of all sacrifices and austerities."

As we study the socio-cultural-religious-and philosophical significance of secular values, in Ramayana, we can make a division of each section and evaluate totally the significance of the three sections and arrive at the totality of the secular values in Ramayana. At the outset, we take the social significance of the secular values in Ramayana. We find the administrative set-up in Ayodya was designed to provide the maximum happiness, for the maximum number of people, for the maximum period, based on the principles of Dharma, Righteousness and moral
Values, which paved the way for the future generation. A society in a Kingdom is administered by the King and the obligations of the people to the Ruler, are manifold. It may look, as a matter of fact, the King is the protector of all concerned and the benefactor of his subjects; while so the King has to administer on the principles of Dharma, Righteousness and Justice, based on moral values, for the good of the people and the welfare of his subjects. Any deviation in the slightest manner, is supposed to be dereliction on the part of the King. Here, the point for direct evaluation is, the King applies and administers secularism, in administering Justice to all, without any discrimination whatsoever. If the King fails in this respect on any account, there the mechanism of secularism gets paralysed and equal opportunity of Justice to his subjects might become inadequate. The Society depends on its ruler for its welfare and the society in turn fulfils all its obligations, expected of them, to their Ruler.

"..." king Dasaratha advises, his son, Rama saying, quote: "My son, although you are a store house of merits, I wish to offer you some friendly advice,"
out of sheer affection, Reporting to even greater humility (than before) constantly keep your sense under control. Avoid vices born of hurt and anger."

King Dasaratha also tells Rama, as follows:

"Rule according to both the direct and indirect methods of governance."

He continues to say to Rama, as follows:

"I hope the laws are administered Justly and impartially. I hope the innocent do not suffer and the guilty are not let off without punishment due to greed" (corruption). I hope disputes between the rich and the poor are dealt with and judged impartially by the Ministers. For, the tears from the eyes of those falsely convicted, destroy the sons and cattle of the King who rules the people for the sake of pleasures, and not caring for equity and Justice." 4 Sri Rama says to his father, Dasaratha, his illuminating address, as follows: after taking
his advice, on the craftmanship of a Ruler: " A wise king holds sway over the earth and administering justice to the people quite in consonance with righteousness, surely, ascends to heaven when detached from his body."

Evidently and portently important is the advice given by Surpanaka, the sister of Ravana, the King of Sri Lanka, and she says, as follows to the King, Ravana: " A King, who fails to attend to his duties personally, at proper moment, hastens his downfall and ruins himself and his realm - "

Surpanaka further advises her brother, Ravana, the King of Sri Lanka: " A King who thinks too much of himself, who is evasive, self-conceited and ever irritable has to be mortally afraid even of his own kith and kin." " Kings are said to be far-sighted because they can easily visualise the distant calamities with the aid of spies."^5

Surpanaka, further advises her brother, Ravana, the King of Sri Lanka, as follows: " That king alone, who is discreet, erudite, self-controlled, grateful and who obeys the Divine Law, can rule this Kingdom long; "That king is verily worshipped by his subjects,
who, though physically asleep is mentally awake, and does not indiscriminately punish or reward them". "A slanderer, one steeped in worldly pleasures, one who is not in tune, with time and one who cannot discriminate the good from the bad loses his empire and perishes soon."

What we find from the above advice, given to and taken by, we directly visualise, our rich heritage enshrined in the Ramayana Shines through every fact of the epic, like the sophisticated instructions on public administration, which have eternal relevance to humanity! This is how, we price this invaluable, immortal epic, full of invaluable gems, like an ocean, and the Prime role of the human Avathara, is to educate humans on all respects of the art of living. We have to quote:

Swashiptpraśābhya paripaâyamanāṁ
nyāyēṇa mārgēṇa mahi mākiśāka,
gōbrāhmanēbhyāṁ subhamāṣṭhaṁ niḥyaṁ,
lōkāsanasthāha śukhīṁ bhavantu.

We have in the above slōka, from Sri Valmiki Maharshi’s original Sanskrit Ramayana, saying, "May the epic continue to reveal its infinite wisdom to the people of Bharath and bless us all as envisaged in the universal prayer".
As we study the social status of women in India, we immediately go back to, as back as the Vedic period and praise in high esteem and reverence all the women sages and remarkably chaste women of the highest order and held in great esteem among the women as a universal body. In Ramayana, the great Epic of India and even in Mahabharatha, we have the status of women, held as high as the peak heights and even today we worship those women as Angels of our land. A woman, an Indian woman, today stands as a true representative of Indian Culture. In Ramayana period, there are a number of women, who stood for nobility and a high stature of character and they remain, even today as a true model and archetype of Indian womanhood.

Valmiki Ramayana can be taken as a real model Kavya, for our study of social set-up of women, during the period of Ramayana, as a treasure of devotion, culture, courage and dedication. To understand Ramayana we have to make a thorough study of the women in the Epic and virtually, people adore them, worship them as Angel Gods. Ramayana throws a lot of light, on the Sociological study. Indian womenhood must strive its best to maintain the ecological characters.
Ramayana is full of exemplary characters, among women each one being of a very high order, unmatched. In Valmiki's Ramayana, Valmiki's Seetha is a unique personality and a glorious example of a women, archetype in Indian culture. We are able to know from the ethical history of ancient India, an idea of the values of life. Our Upanishads speak more often of the final goal of life, the means to its attainment and the inner peace and joy which it signifies than of "being", or of "knowing" as such we may also have to note, in this regard, that one of the distinguishing features of Indian Philosophy is that throughout its long history, it has consistently given the foremost place to values.

Now, I wish to evaluate the values of Life, with the prime subject of the value of social status of women in Ramayana. Valmiki calls, as a matter of fact, this epic, Ramayana, as the great biography of Sita, who is the unique personality, as she stands for purity, chastity, and wifely fidelity. Equally important are the women characters of Mandodari, wife of Ravana, the King of Sri Lanka, and other exemplary
personalities of Kausalya, the mother of Sri Rama, Kaikeyi, Ahalya, Tara, Ruma, Anasuya and Sabari. I have chosen to highlight the women characters of this great Epic, Ramayana, only to bring to limelight, the socio-cultural significance of women characters and its involvement in secular Values. These important women characters do purport great secular values, not only to the women of the said Epic age, but to the entirety of womenhood; because the excellent character of Sita brings home to every Indian woman, to practice, purity, chastity and wife fidelity.

Valmiki is very critical about the nature of women, and he does not generalise his observation about women as it does not apply to all. Indian womanhood is unique in every respect, when compared to all parts of the world; but the Indian woman is known for her, Strma Dharma, and that is why, Indian culture has been highly respected in the other parts of the world because Indian womanhood stands the testimony. The genealogical heritage of Indian women has been presenting to our nation the psychological fact, of the importance of the influence of the women at home, on her children, and their behaviour. It is also believed the best of
any civilisation is the measure of reverence that a society accords to its women folk and also the purity the modesty and loyalty to the husband a woman possesses in that society.

It is remarkably, in great excellence that we observe, that Valmiki is purely concerned about the Stree - Dharma, which is very essential for a sane Society and every woman of culture should follow. In our Epic, Ramayana, the attitude of the social status of women was not different from that of the Vedic period, wherein they had equal importance as men, in all respects of social, cultural and religious affairs.

The significance of the Secular Values of the social status of women in Ramayana, is excellently portrayed by Valmiki, in his saying, and in true words, Valmiki, idealises a woman, by designating her mode of behaviour which is at one right, proper, appropriate time and for the benefit and welfare of her husband always. Valmiki rightly describes the social secular character of an Indian woman to be an ideal, wife to her husband, always ready for counselling him for his welfare; she should be soft-spoken,
and a well-wisher of her husband, she is the pillar of the family-structure and on her rests the harmony and progress of the family. According to Valmiki a husband is the very God to a woman. There is also a belief that a woman serving her husband, with all earnestness and sincerity achieves Dharma, and a woman who neglects her duties towards her husband goes to hell.

We also come to know, that the women of Ramayana, had fair knowledge of ancient legends and folk literature and they also received good education in fine arts, dance and music. We also find, in Ramayana, as described by Maharshi Valmiki, that the relationship between wife and her husband goes beyond the present life into future ones. Valmiki says, the wife is a Dharmapatni, to her husband in the sense that she is given in marriage to her husband to be his companion in the performance of all religious acts. The highest glory of a woman lies in motherhood. Valmiki speaks to the women, in general, saying that a wife is known as Jaayaa because the husband is born in her as a son. A wife should always treat her husband
like a God, though he was wealthy or poor and a chaste woman does this so, to tell all the women, to adopt this culture, invaluable and unparalleled to woman-hood. Valmiki believes that a mother is ten times greater than a father. She surpasses in glory the entire earth. Valmiki says, "who could equal in veneration, the Mother?" 12

Whatever might be the attitude of the society in general and male characters in particular, in Ramayana towards woman, one must help appreciating and respecting the ideals for which the women of Ramayana stood, and the way they behaved with their wisdom, veracity, courage of conviction and sense of propriety. We find Ramayana presents two dimensions about the status of women and the social significance, with its secular values to the Society, in particular one, the ideal held by Valmiki regarding how one should treat a woman, on account of her sex, weakness and so on, and the other as to how one should treat a woman but also stresses the importance of, the respect to a woman, as a sign of cultured society. Depending
upon the different regions of their nativity, one can identify many parallel views in their cultural patterns, eventhough there were a number of diverse practices also. The social role and the cultural enactment of women in Ramayana drives us to an appreciative awareness, about the function and responsibility of a woman, as an Agent of Culture, in our Society. Much more can be said about the social and cultural set up of the epic Ramayana; but the status of women both in social and cultural fields, draws our greater attention towards the secular values, it signifies.

Regarding the religious significance of the Epic Ramayana, and its secular values to the society, we have to simply contribute the public opinion, with greater importance to their practice of worshipping Sri Rama, their God in person. People knew, Sri Rama is the God, Lord Vishnu, and that he had incarnated, as a human-god, to establish Dharma, and to save the same, by punishing the wicked. The Royal preceptor, the Kulaguru taught the people, the religion the people would practise would be the, Establishment of Dharma,
Righteousness and Justice. People worshipped Lord Shiva also, as their choice worship and the great seers taught them the best religion they could follow - was all in Truth, Righteousness and Justice, in thought, word and deed, in their daily life. The heart and soul of people of Rama Rajya, through its literature, both secular and sacred concentrated and pursued for the sake of religion. Their ideals cannot be separated from their religious aspirations. The social life of the people of Rama Rajya must have been well developed not only in matters of religion but also in different branches of social sciences. The excellence of the people of Ramayana in the field of religion in particular and other branches of knowledge in general are very much evident in their counselling, behaviour and commitment to the path of righteousness and truthful to their behaviour. The people of Rama Rajya were more and more same, in their conduct and behaviour and religious practices, with the goal of higher values of human life.
CHAPTER - 8

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