

## श्री गणेशाय नमः

### Ramayan

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#### 1. Learning Outcome

- To understand a few dimensions of Ramayan for application into contemporary life
- To understand the application of Ramayan for overall Human Quality Development

#### 2. Introduction

Ramayan, as most people would know is the scripture that covers life of Bhagwan Shree Ram and Devi Sita. There are numerous versions and interpretations of Ramayan, each with unique insights in different fields like Governance, Administration, Social Theory, Policy making, Leadership etc. The first and basic Ramayan was composed by Aadi Kavi Valmiki. Among other various versions, Ram Charit Manas of TulsiDas ji has wide acceptance in Bharat. Similarly Kamban Ramayan is popular in Southern part. This module for drawing learning in area of human quality development refers mostly to Valmiki's Ramayan and Ramcharit Manas of TulsiDas.

The world, in general, is facing challenges of ethical standards, motivational issues, lack of culture of creativity and innovation, and leadership crisis to name a few. The scholars and practitioners are in pursuit of addressing these issues. In this scenario, referring back to our ancestral wisdom in form of scriptures like Ramayan, can help us achieve higher levels of human quality development. The module, briefly describes the major events as presented in Ramayan and then presents the analysis to draw the relevant learning.

### 3. Introduction to Ramayan

Bhagwan Vishnu incarnates himself whenever there are extreme cases of violations of Dharm (not same as religion, it is more of duties, justice, ethics etc) in the world. Among his various incarnations, the one in form of Shree Ram is very popular among Bharatiya people. The name itself signifies the importance as Ram means one who resides in heart of the people (जो सबके मन में रमण करें).

The era when Ravan's acts were making life of people, nature, animals miserable Shree Ram takes birth in kingdom of Ayodhya, ruled by King Dashrath. Along with him Shesh Naag incarnates in form of Lakshman. Maa Lakshmi takes birth at kingdom of Mithila, which is ruled by virtuous King Janak. In early life, Shree Ram with his brothers (Lakshman, Bharat and Shatrughn) studies in Gurukul, comes back to Ayodhya and again he with Lakshman leaves for offering services to Rishi Vishwamitra. The need was to slay some demons and monsters who had been hindering the Yagya and other Dharmik processes. During the journey, they reach to King Janak's place, where Ram lifts and strings the famous bow of Bhagwan Shiv. After this, he gets married to Devi Sita.

Thereafter, circumstances changed and Shree Ram, Sita and Lakshman leave for exile of 14 years in jungle. Manthara through an evil counsel could force even a simple lady like Kaikeyi to follow unvirtuous path. But, Bharat (younger brother), had full faith and devotion towards Shree Ram, offered his selfless services to kingdom in absence of Shree Ram by putting his Khadau (traditional wooden footwear) on the King's seat. During the exile Sree Ram, Lakshman and Mata Sita faced attack from numerous demons (but all of them got killed). They also met various Sages and learned men and women. Ravan, in order to take revenge of his sister, abducts Devi Sita and flies back to Lanka (his abode). There Vibhishan and other senior people condemn the cowardly act of his, and persuade him to return Devi Sita to Shree Ram. But all efforts go waste and Vibhsishan is ousted from Kingdom, who then ultimately reaches to Shree Ram.

Ram and Lakshman get introduced to Sugriv (King of Vaanar) by Hanuman ji (incarnation of Bhagwan Shiv). Shree Ram, with the help of Hanuman, Sugriv, Vibhishan and Vaanar sena is able to defeat the Lanka and free Devi Sita from captivity of Ravan. They all come back and Shree Ram takes over as the king of Ayodhya and rules on strong foundations of dharm. Everyone was at peace; there was social harmony and mutual trust for years till he lived.

Sometime later, Devi Sita had to leave the kingdom to avoid any kind of stain on her character. She was expecting baby and so had to face various hardships. We can imagine how difficult times it would have been for all the people. Even the announcement of her departure made Bharat and Shatrughn go faint. Finally, she was offered stay by Rishi Valmiki; she gave birth to twins Lav and Kush, who got excellent education at Aashram of Rishi Valmiki. Finally, Sita reaches back to her Vaikunth dhaam (original abode of Bhagwan Vishnu and Maa Lakshmi) after the earth gives her space. Later Bhagwan Ram also, took Jal Samadhi with numerous people to reach his abode.

### 3.1 Structure of Ramayan

The Ramayan is divided into Kand (sub sections), with each bearing the name related to content mentioned in it.

The following are the Kand –

- Baal Kaand – containing story of early life of Shree Ram and his brothers
- Ayodhya Kaand – return of Shree Ram from Gurukul and departure for exile
- Aranya Kaand – Shree Ram, Devi Sita and Lakshman in exile (aranya means jungle)
- Kishkindha Kaand – Meeting Hanuman ji, Sugriva etc (kishkindha was kingdom of Vaanar)
- Sundar Kaand – Hanuman ji locates Devi Sita and Vaanar sena prepares for war (most beautiful composition within the Ramayan)
- Yuddh Kaand – Attack on Lanka
- Uttar Kand – Return to Ayodhya, Lav-Kush and final departure to Vaikunth

### 3.2 Sections of Ramayan and Learning for Human Quality Development

#### 3.2.1 Baal kaand

- Naarad Rishi briefly portrays story of Ramayan to Valmiki Rishi. The whole Ramayan is covered in 24000 shlok and here he summarizes in just 100 shlok. One can learn how to express ideas in brevity, without losing essence. This is also an interesting format of writing executive summary or a story.
- Description of Ayodhya includes presence of wise ministers who are with high ethical standards, have control over senses and are able to develop cordial relations with public. This is input for modern day families, organizations, and nations that importance of any entity is through the ethical and people with high standards and not mere materialistic gains.
- Curiosity of Shree Ram is on full display when he keeps on asking wise questions to Guru, ministers and other senior people whenever he gets an opportunity. This is a display of humble nature and eagerness to learn.
- Vishwamitra proposes faith on young Shree Ram when he asks King Dashrath to depute him for slaying demons. This displays the ability to identify the leader and propose full faith on him.
- When Shree Ram reach to King Janak's Mithila and puts string on the bow of Bhagwan Shiv, he does not starts boasting of himself, rather remains calm and composed. He even is able to pacify Lakshman who starts to react and respond to views of people

#### 3.2.2 Ayodhya Kaand

- Below is presented the description of Shree Ram's personality traits.
  - *Approach towards others* - Never finding faults in others, remaining grateful, spends time in community of good people only, respect for elders
  - *Approach towards self control* - Calm, composed, kind hearted, polite speaker and resorts to truth, control over senses, anger, desires, follower of Dharm and Shastra who is not interested in even listening to unethical discussions and talks, ability to control extreme reactions even of others
  - *Continuous learning* - Highly skilled and educated and still eager for learning from elders, sharp memory

- *Other traits* - Puts duty on highest priority, healthy, dynamic and energetic humble, respects dignity, all activities are productive and never useless, does not procrastinate, full of Patience
- Bharat's approach to the situation of exile for Shree Ram
  - Renouncing pleasures and understanding responsibility too. He did not compromise on his duty to run the kingdom efficiently. But also ensured that he sets high ethical standards by renouncing all pleasures that a king enjoys.

### 3.2.3 Aranya Kaand

- Mata Sita in discussion with Shree Ram mentions three personality traits that one should be free from –
  - Making fake / false statements
  - Dis-respect / lust towards women
  - Uncalled violence or animosity
- She also emphasizes on importance of pious surroundings, free of violence, non-possession weapons etc which incite feeling of insecurity and ultimately leading to self-destruction.
- Shree Ram, when approached by Munis and Tapasvis for protection from demons, instead of expecting respect and praise for his works, he humbly apologizes for not being proactive in serving to good people for noble cause and promises to do his best by eradicating demons.
- Golden deer incident - Lakshman displays high level of acumen by explaining to Mata Sita and Shree Ram that it is act of demon and this is unnatural. From this one can learn to apply brain and think logically and rationally to save one from any major problems that may arise due to lack of self control and attraction towards materialistic growths.
- Jatayu puts his best of efforts to rescue Mata Sita from Ravan. He fearlessly puts on best of himself to fight for the safety of a woman. This is very essential in current times, that we put high emphasis on safety of women and stories like of Jatayu should be set as an example.
- Shabari – If one reads Ramayan and adopts what Shree Ram has set as high standards in human interaction, one can learn to respect each and every living being. Shabri herself has lot of learning through display of perseverance and patience and hope.

### 3.2.4 Kishkindha Kaand

- Sugriv sending Hanuman ji to explore about Shree Ram and Lakshman. This incident calls for self-introspection that when one is insecure, he may not be able to even trust the person who could be able to contribute for his well-being. At the same time, the way Shree Ram responded is a great learning that – even in such cases being humble and building trust is essential for long term relationships.
- Collaborating for mutual benefit on ethical standards – Shree Ram offers full support to Sugriv not just for sake of getting support in return, but on ethical standards, as it was clear to him that Bali had betrayed Sugriv.
- Never to betray in partnership – Sugriv after being able to regain kingdom with support from Shree Ram, gets indulged in materialistic pleasures of the kingdom and forgets the duties. So, he had to be reminded of the duties by his wife and aggression of Lakshman. This is essential learning in modern day, where we repeatedly witness such incidences.

### 3.2.5 Sundar Kaand

- Contemplation by Vaanar on how to cross the ocean in search of Mata Sita and Hanumaan ji taking off. The kishkindha kaand ends with Jamvant reminding Hanuman ji of the infinite powers he had and the purpose of his life (serving Bhagwan Ram). The leaders, team members need to know each other's strengths and weaknesses. This is essential in time of crisis, as the person who possesses those skills might need to be reminded of it.
- Hanumaan jee facing Rakshas enroute to Lanka- Be ready for surprise tests, checks and balances.
  - Sursa was actually a deity but came to test Hanumaan ji. Sometimes the well-wishers may take a surprise test. It may be well thought off or even unintended. The end benefit will be person's, if one is dedicated to the cause.
  - Meeting a demon who catches flying objects through their shadow - Intelligence rules over physical power or any kind of tricks and pranks. Analysis of problem to reach to the root cause is must before attempting the solution.
  - Meeting Lankini on reaching Lanka - hitting her on head and then she remembers Brahma's words - Anyone could observe you. Need to remain alert and attentive even after everything is strategically planned. Remaining alert and attentive is essential, even if plan seems perfect
- Surprised to find Vibhishan (a devotee of Bhagwan) in Lanka. World is not full of enemies. There are good people everywhere. Connect with them, make them feel comfortable. Higher purpose in life enables good relationship at any stage and anywhere, even in seemingly hostile environment.
- Meeting Mata Sita and witnessing troubles faced by her.
  - Hanuman ji finds mata Sita forced to live in a hostile environment without any information of Shri Ram and Lakshman. Ability to understand problems of others and provide hope
- Battle with Rakshas of Lanka in Ashok Vatika and getting caught by Indrajeet and seeing Ravan.
  - Entered into enemy's area, fought with them and then getting caught by Brahm-Astra to show respect towards Brahm. Short term sacrifices are essential to ensure the long term benefits.
- Fire lit on tail, and then bringing Lanka to Ashes - Ravan ordered to lit fire on tail of Hanumaan j.
  - He did not get deterred, rather utilized this opportunity to bring Lanka to ashes. Even worst that happens with one, it can be turned into benefit.
- Hanumaan ji returns to camp of Shri Ram and narrates whatever happened in Lanka and ends with a note that it's all because of your grace, nothing great of me.
  - Respecting the importance of source of energy and guidance.
- Ram praying to Ocean for providing path to Lanka, after seeing no response getting ready to dry it up and finally ocean responds.
  - Ram could have dried by ocean in the first go, but accepting advice of Vibhishan, he prayed to Ocean for three days to give path. When seeing no response, he is also ready to dry up ocean, because primary motive was to free Mata Sita from Lanka and free people from atrocities caused by Ravan. Even after having huge power, one must respect others. At the same time this should not deter one from the goal.

### 3.2.6 Yuddh Kaand

- Shri Ram while praising the qualities of Hanuman ji expresses that on being deployed on a mission by Sugriv he has accomplished various tasks (apart from those assigned). Further he describes three types of servicemen a) one who does extra work than assigned work based on potential and capabilities; b) one who does not puts effort for extra work even having potential; c) one who does

not accomplishes assigned task. Among these three first category is the best, second average and third is lowest grade.

- Kumbhkarn's approach: On being informed of the abduction of Mata Sita, he initially rejects the idea as unholy and criticizes the act of Ravan. But since, it was the matter of past, so he makes Ravan feel comfortable by declaring his stance in favour of Lanka. He expresses full support against enemy forces to protect the kingdom of his brother, as he felt it was his duty to do so.
- Vibhishan presenting views in Ravan's darbar and getting thrown away from the kingdom finally reaching to Vibhishan presented his views that Ravan should shun animosity with Shri Ram and respectfully let Mata Sita go to him. But Ravan's arrogance led him to throw Vibhishan out of Lanka, and he finally reached to Shri Ram. Multiple implications - first, one should not be arrogant like Ravan, who ignores the advice of well wishers. Second, in case one is being discarded from a place there are better avenues available. Every incidence is a great opportunity.
- Shree Ram's approach to welcoming a refugee: When Vibhishan reaches to camp of Shree Ram all people other than Hanuman ji were not in favour of welcoming him. But Shree Ram clarified that any person who comes for refugee should be given a chance and it was his firm belief.

### 3.2.7 Uttara Kand

- Humble discussion of Shree Ram in Ayodhya with Rishi and Muni and courtiers: Even on being king who could give orders to various people, Shree Ram always believed in getting concurrence from all the members of the court. He used to consult, seek opinions and then take the decision which was in the interest of the public. He remained humble while listening to the views of experts.
- Description of all acts of Ravan: The abuse of power is one of the major concerns in the history of life on earth. Various incidents describe the implications of abuse of power. Ravan who was highly knowledgeable, industrious and full of determination could not survive because of power abuse. Therefore, most important learning is to remain humble even on attaining the power.

## 4. Application in Human Quality Development

The learning from Ramayan has to be customized as per requirements of the individual. This section classifies learning from Ramayan for four phases /roles of human beings and the insights that can be drawn for human quality development. The sub-sections discuss how Ramayan can be studied and internalized to strengthen those dimensions of human personality.

### 4.1 Early Childhood and Elementary stage

Key highlights:

- Even being the sons of king, Shree Ram and his brothers lived an austere life under tutelage of their Guru and Gurumata.
- They used to obey the teachers, performed duties, and lived a life of swamlamban (self-reliance).
- They gained the necessary skill set required to perform duties in coming years of the life.

Therefore, we can learn that initial years of life are essential to development the human personality. Self-discipline and respect for teachers are two foundations for development. Today, we find world craving for high quality education for children in terms of latest technology and infrastructure, but the need is to understand that to be developed we need to instill importance of self-discipline and mutual respect through learning at home and schools.

## 4.2 Teenage, Adolescence and Youth

### Remaining alert

When Hanuman ji reaches Lanka, he assumes a micro sized shape, but still gets caught by Lankini. He then immediately senses the danger and hits her powerfully on head. The youth tend to ignore the implications and consider everything to be “full-proof”. Hanumaan ji teaches here that even if everything is well planned, one should remain alert and attentive.

### Be ready for surprise tests, checks and balances.

Hanumaan ji while traveling to Lanka faces Sursa who was sent by deities to check the mental acumen of Hanuman ji. He could get through her easily. This is most essential learning for youth that parents, teachers and elders may test the potential not for critiquing, but making one confident of oneself. These should be taken in positive stride.

### Duty over desires and rights

Bharat's approach to life and duty provides exemplary learning in terms of fulfillment of duties and getting rid of desires that are not in the interest of family and society. Post exile to Shree Ram, he decides to fulfill his duty towards society by leading the kingdom, but at the same time ensuring that desires don't even try to obstruct him from his devotion towards Shree Ram. He serves kingdom by living in outskirts and places khadau of Shree Ram on the seat of throne.

## 4.3 Middle and Senior ages

### Team Management

- **Knowing the team:** When all Vaanar contemplate on the ways to cross the ocean in search of Mata Sita, the kishkindha kaand ends with Jamvant reminding Hanuman ji of the infinite powers he had and the purpose of his life (serving Bhagwan Ram). This provides insights for the senior members in the team that they need to be aware of strengths and weaknesses of their team members. This is essential especially in time of crisis, as the person who possesses those skills might need to be reminded of it.
- **Managing diversity in the team:** Shree Ram had a diverse team with people like Lakshman, Hanuman, Sugriv, Jamvant, Angad etc. He never took decision without consulting them / listening to their point of view (even if contradictory).

### Turning tides into favour

When in Lanka, Ravan orders that fire be lit on Hanuman ji's tail, he rather than getting perturbed, utilizes this opportunity to bring Lanka to ashes. The most important quality that human beings need to possess is this ability to turn the tides in favor.

## 4.4 Retirement and thereon

### Devotion towards Bhagwan

All the senior virtuous people whom Shree Ram visited had a common thing – unflinching faith and devotion towards Bhagwan. Learning from Shabri is most important in this regard. Even on being ignored and neglected by society, she in her old age posed full faith in words of her Guru that Bhagwan Shree Ram will visit the Aashram. She had trust on words of her Guru and faith on Bhagwan that he would definitely fulfill his promise.



## **5. Concluding Notes and Summary**

Ramayan, for ages has played an important role in development of human qualities. The scriptures like Ramayan are termed as Shashwat (eternal) meaning thereby that the implications are true and valid across the time and space. The scriptures like Ramayan are knowledge repositories of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary knowledge. This makes them more relevant for the life, as subject knowledge is not bifurcated into hyper specialized disciplines.

Today, there are discussions and deliberations at level of governments, policy think tanks, social groups, academicians, and practitioners about improving human quality development index. The parameters of such initiatives are skewed towards extrinsic parameters of development. Those are essential to start with, but simultaneously, we need to focus on intrinsic and inherent aspects of human development. In this context, Ramayan provides a lot of learning that can contribute to individual's human quality development.

The lifestyle, processes of learning, conduct of a person as a child, as a student, as a youth, as a family member, as a member of organization, as a leader, as a friend etc. needs to be perfectly balanced for a successful and high quality life. Ramayan teaches the various options for the above mentioned areas. The various people, with expertise in different domains, through their principles in life provide the frameworks, which one can choose as per liking and coherence, ultimately leading to high level of human quality index.