

SHRI SITA RAM FOUNDATION BLOG POSTS

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Blog Heading: A deeper look towards Ramayana!

We cannot deny the fact that we live in dark times as we are constantly informed of the dangers lurk. It has affected not only our personal relations, but also the quality of life as a whole. Unfortunately, we tend to downplay this grave issue by casually blaming the overall degeneration of values and ethics in our society.

It is in this context the **5000-year-old Ramayana** acquires increasing relevance as it could provide us the critical link to solve many of these contemporary issues.

There is a popular belief that the Ramayana is just a religious text meant for '**plain reading**'. The heart of the problem lies in such an attitude. We have never been able to understand its **importance or the diversity of perspectives it carries**.



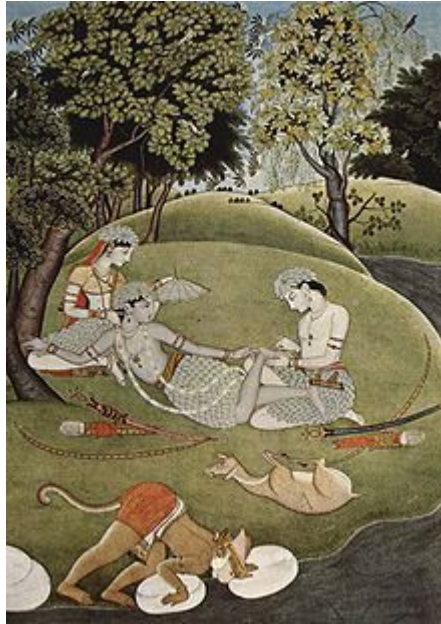
Lord Ram and Sita

The month of Ramayana recital is here and it gives us a new opportunity to delve deep into this universal and perennial source of knowledge.

In a nutshell, Ramayana is the story of **Lord Shree Rama who strived hard to make his kingdom a heaven on earth**. The text establishes its poignant message of love and compassion with the first verse of '**Ma Nishada**' (**Oh! hunter thou shall not**), itself. Literally, the verse urges the wild hunter to stop the violence, but in the larger context, it commands us to abstain from all appearances of evil.

With his concept of Ram-Rajya, **Mahatma Gandhi extolled the virtues of principled rule as well as truth and righteousness**. Gandhi implied an ideal land which ensures equal rights to everyone and where values of justice, idealism and renunciation are practiced.

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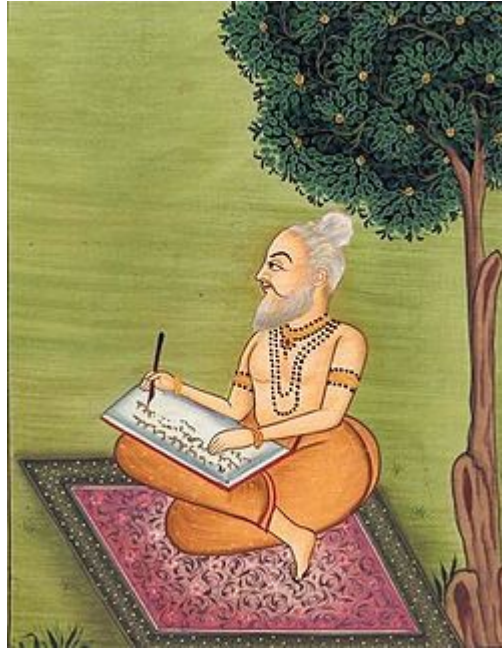


Rama with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana during exile in forest, manuscript, ca. 1780
Rama was certain of Sita's chastity, yet he wanted her to walk through fire to prove it to his people when one of his subjects leveled an allegation. **Ramayana envisaged such a society in which the ruler needs to be spotless and answerable to his subjects.**

Ramayana dwells in detail several instances of defense against the offenders of Dharma. In a world where senseless violence and random acts of cruelty seem to be common and almost acceptable, the **'ideal land' conceptualized in the epic holds relevance for contemporary society.**

Valmiki, the poet who wrote Ramayana was originally a thief, named Ratnakar. Interestingly, Ramayana does not begin with the story of Lord Rama, but it dramatically starts with the poignant tale of the hunter who happened to kill the 'Krauncha' bird. Valmiki's transformation from being a dacoit to an enlightened sage itself is an inspiring story that motivates one to give up all the negative qualities and become a better person.

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An artist's impression of sage Valmiki composing the Ramayana

Hundreds of versions of original Ramayana, which comprises around **2,400 slokas**, are known to exist with subtle differences, and without major changes to the central theme. We need to discuss the encapsulations of meanings and thoughtful messages enshrined in Ramayana in detail rather than just enjoying the story. **It contains an ocean of message for the betterment of humanity about love for nature, universal co-existence, power, governance, human relationships and principles of war.**

In Ramayana, **Ayodhya literally means 'a place where there is no war'**. Not only our country, but also the entire world needs to work towards establishing an '**Ayodhya**' to ensure that there would be no more bloodshed.

Currently, our society is going through a turmoil even as we are busy battling our inner demons. It is time for us to tread the path shown in Ramayana by upholding compassion, brotherhood, humanity and, of course, love for the world.

Take Shri Sita Ram Foundation's heartfelt thank you to all concerned for the decision to let you all know about "Ramayana" at this juncture. But let us be responsible, safe and yes, compassionate.

Jai Shree Ram!!