

SHRI SITA RAM FOUNDATION BLOG POSTS

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By: Priyanka Gupta

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Human beings are slaves to their desires, blindly surrendering to their unfathomable urge for power, pleasure and property. Unlike animals where the primal engine of survival is **satiabable hunger (primarily food)**, humans are entrapped by their worldly hunger (**desires**) with absolutely no limitations.

The reason behind this enslavement is an **uncontrolled mind which circumscribes the human ability to act rationally**. It creates unwarranted imaginary visuals of forthcoming events that leads to doubt and confusion. It scares us and drives us to think about our future; generates a desire to establish a secured livelihood devoid of any calamity and scarcity. **Our action aligns with our fear and thus begins the vicious cycle of entrapment**. One is hardly able to look beyond self. This can be identified as the Householder way of life i.e. one filled with worldly duties and desires. Here, the sense of self (and family) overshadows the sense of society. Selfish motive overpowers the need for the greater good.

However, **through guidance and teachings, humanity changed its path to a different way of life**. One that was devoid of attachments and focused entirely on the realisation of self. This came to be known as the Hermit way of life i.e. one that required a person to meditate, deeply reflect, and dive out of fantasies to focus on reality. Subsequently, it led to detachment, utter indifference and finally abandonment of all the external relationships. Friendship and family ties now seemed like a burden. Kinship, marriage and social obligations became irrelevant and social order witnessed a radical halt.

This societal shift highlighted two parallel discourses i.e. the householder way of life and the hermit way of life. However, none appealed to the masses in its entirety; leaving no profound impact on **Humanity**. To clear out the chaos and **define a new way of life, epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata took the centre stage**. Their plots raised some serious questions for Human civilization to ponder upon.



Rama with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana during exile in forest.

One such interesting tale of Ramayana is illustrated below.

Dashratha, the king of Ayodhya, is driven by his desire for a glorious future, obsessed with the idea of attaining immortality through the establishment of a powerful legacy (leading to the desire for a son). Thus, when his first wife Kaushalya is unable to bear him a child, he persuades himself to remarry. Royal astrologers claim that **Princess Kaikeyi** (of neighbouring Kingdom) is destined to deliver a rightful heir. She is a beautiful woman from a royal lineage but is loaded with the desire for power. Dashratha adores Kaikeyi not just for

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her physical beauty but also for saving his life on the battlefield. He feels indebted and as a token of gratitude, assures her of two unconditional boons which could be utilised at any point of time in her life. Years later, on the eve of Ram's coronation, her insecurities creep in and **she demands fulfilment of her long-pending boons in form of exile for Ram and throne for her son, Bharata**. Dashratha cries and curses but finally oblige to her demands. The revered sage of the Royal Clan, Vasishtha, is bothered and agitated but does not revolt. How can an ascetic be involved in worldly matters, after all, he feels? He remains a silent spectator; a mere puppet acting as per the royal decree, thereby preferring inaction. Thus, both fail in their respective duties and the subsequent events of Ramayana unfold.

Dashratha falls prey to his desire i.e. to uphold his promises at any cost and act upon his wife's wishes rather than thinking about the wishes of his subjects. What was more important- duty of a King or promise of a husband?

Vasishtha, on the other hand, submits to his principle of detachment. He doesn't act (even when the circumstances demand his intervention) to completely dissociate himself from petty palace politics. What was more important- disengagement of a hermit and silently witnessing the wrong-doing or being duty-bound for people of Ayodhya even if that means an open opposition to the King?

This act of balancing between the personal necessities and professional duties leads to a moral dilemma which has been termed as Dharma-Sankat in our scriptures. No human can run away from it.

Ramayana, in light of the above mentioned example, suggests that the answer lies neither in the detachment nor in the desires, neither being a hermit nor a householder. The focus should always be on the larger ecosystem for a greater good rather than the selfish sense of self. **The aim should be to follow Dharma (moral righteousness) i.e. weighing the circumstances around any event and then acting as per the conscience rather than being driven by a self-centered approach.** Remember, the answer lies within; neither with the enlightened sage nor with the unenlightened king!

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!!