

SHRI SITA RAM FOUNDATION BLOG POSTS

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As another Diwali approaches, my mind wanders off to the epic story that I have heard since childhood. Different versions of it have travelled all over the world. Different interpretations have been drawn over the years, changing as the socio-cultural climate changes. But, the one thing that has remained is that **Ramayana is essentially about homecoming.**

In a world that urges us to travel more, to see new places and meet new people, the journey to our inner home is the most important journey that we undertake in this lifetime — the journey to return to the self.

Each person that we meet and each experience that we encounter, ultimately reveals a part of us that we couldn't have discovered on our own. It could be love, it could be marriage or enmity with our own brothers and sisters or the idea of being born to a certain set of parents or a specific family — the reasons that we encounter all these people in our lives is to understand ourselves better.

And that is exactly what Ramayana is also all about. Here are the key lessons from Ramayana that we can take today.



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Banished From Home — Being Out Of Comfort Zone

While conditions in Ayodhya become problematic, Ram chooses to leave the kingdom to appease his stepmother and his unwilling father. While he could have chosen to fight the judgement, Ram chooses to go out of his comfort zone on a journey that perhaps at the time, even he didn't know was what his soul truly desired.

Along with him, both Lakshman and Sita also choose to go out of their comfort zones and risk the dangerous life of a forest giving all of us a major lesson.

A life of great victory and great celebration does not come to those who stay in their comfort zones. The path to success maybe mired with difficulties but it's truly rewarding in the end.

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Life In The Jungle — Gap Years Are A Time To Reflect

The journey to the forest itself is a metaphor for the journey of the mind to a deeper part of yourself. **If Ram had been involved in the affairs of the kingdom, he would not have had a chance to explore what he is truly made of.** This gap between what he was supposed to do and what he actually did is a great lesson in truly finding one's own path. The same goes for Sita and Lakshman who might have followed Ram on this journey but still had their own roads to traverse.

In a world that constantly urges us to be productive; to keep doing something all the time; to keep our hands, eyes, senses busy, **Ramayana teaches us to reflect.**

In a society that looks down upon gap years whether it is in education or a job or a break from work during maternity, there is no time to pause, to reflect, to truly meditate upon what one is made of, what one enjoys and what one likes or dislikes. Because the path where you are seemingly **'doing nothing'** sounds dangerous.

As such, there are millions out there who do not understand the purpose of their lives or their passions or desires and are trapped in the drudgery of boredom in jobs that they don't like or in lives that they are forced to live in.

Crossing The Lakshman Rekha — Breaking Boundaries

Lakshman Rekha was drawn for Sita's protection but was broken by her because she wanted to help a beggar. Similarly, while Lakshman did not have a line of control, he broke his promise to Ram of looking after Sita in his absence and crossed the boundary of a promise. Ram also crossed the boundary of the sacred vows he took with his wife Sita and abandoned her over hearsay and gossip. Ravan also crossed a line when he kidnapped Sita and took her away without her consent.

People step out of the line all the time. Some do it to help others, some do it to fulfill their desires, follow their dreams and others do it out of fear or temptation. **We are all trapped by invisible boundaries in our own heads.** Be it social conditioning or a value system that generations have lived before us, **our fight with our boundaries is mostly internal.**

Ramayana shows us that it is up to the individual to decide which boundaries to break and which not to and we all ultimately do it to honour our own truth. But honouring one's own truth should not give you the right to take away another individuals' right to their truth. In the story, Ravan was killed because he took away Sita's right to say No.

Good Vs Evil — Learning To Live In The Greys

Even though Ramayana has been interpreted as a good vs evil story and in its most simplistic form it borders in a world where something is either black or white, in its truest essence, **the epic tale urges us to look at the greys.** While the epic constantly upholds that which is ideal, all its characters fail to live up to that ideal because ultimately they are all human and flawed.

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Ravana was a well-educated, spiritual and informed king. He was very knowledgeable and yet despite all his knowledge, he crumbles in the face of temptation.

The simplicity of Ramayana lies in the fact that Ravana was punished. Not only Ravana, but Rama too borders between the greys in this story. **A noble king who loves his subjects fought the demon king Ravana and defeated him.** But the same king who fought for his wife could not stand up for her at the most trying time. Over hearsay and gossip, he abandoned her and left her to fend for herself in the forest knowing fully well that a woman had no means to live off, on her own.

Having said that, **one also has to remember that after abandoning Sita, he did not remarry not even for an heir in order to show his loyalty to his wife.** He was called the **“Maryada Purushottam” (ideal upholder of social values)** but he could never be the ideal husband. And unlike Sita, Rama never had to prove his chastity to the world.

But the most wronged in the epic seems to be Sita — **a woman who followed her husband out of sense of duty and was punished for her desire for the golden deer.** Through her story, Valmiki and all the others who wrote the Ramayana after him drew a line of control for all women telling them that crossing that line could have serious consequences.

Ramayana was the story of a noble king and the godliness was appropriated to Rama much later. Rama was no God. Or he was as much God as Sita and Lakshman and even Ravana. He was as much God as you and I. Because **God is nothing but the highest, the best version of ourselves that lives inside us.**

As this Diwali approaches, let's re-read this epic story and even re-write it. Stories can be passed on but that doesn't mean we cannot change them to the times that we are living in. **Let's take the best that this story has to offer and let's change the things we wish to change.** The Sita inside us does not have to light up herself but she has to light up the fire inside our hearts so we can follow our dreams and our passions.

Because that would be the ultimate homecoming.

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!!