

PREFACE

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The Hindu Religious literature, like Srimad Valmiki Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavatm, scripture of the Sanatha Dharma, exhaustively addresses curiosity of human beings by covering mainly the origin of the world, creation of flora and fauna, the supreme almighty, the benefactor, human conduct on different stages of life in line with their respective varna ashrama, the real goal of life, ways and means to attain the ultimate salvation, final beatitude. In short, they establish the foundation of Dharma, the righteous way of living encompassing all the stages of living of the human beings, eternal values to stand the test of times etc to say the least. They are neither monologue nor cryptic instructions or injunctions.

In the course of such a detailed exposition, these literature also laid bare the truth of trials and tribulations, sufferings and comforts, normally acceptable conduct in the times of stress, pleasure etc, which every one of us would undergo. Importantly, these expositions always give about the choices or paths to choose and own up the responsibility for their actions to a discerning reader.

Thus, significantly these literature acts as documentary for psychological counselling and there is every chance that the stressed individual could find solace and move ahead in his day-to-day activities. This is the greatness of the Sanatha Dharma which is one of main reasons for its continued existence, relevance still today and in future period of time.

In line with the above understanding, I intend to write briefly on each chapter of Valmiki Ramayana and try to bring out important points as a free verse translation instead of verse by verse.

In fact, Sage Valmiki, in his list of manifold achievements which can accrue to a reader as well as the listeners of reading Ramayana, makes a special mention, in particular, to undertake one's own rendering depicting the life of Sri Rama. The ever-inspiring Valmiki Ramayana has been reverently analysed word by word, chapter by chapter by many since time immemorial. Sri Rama, himself informs his brothers that Ramayana contains excellent words affording versatile, profound meaning. **विचित्रार्थपदं.**

Water can be filled through different containers for different quantity. Persons standing before a vast expanse of water body may take water in a small cup, bucket of fairly medium size, wagon load etc, either repeatedly or one time. Similarly, with consistent reading,

remembering and thinking over the verses of Ramayana, not only enable one to unravel the subtle meanings but also revel and marvel the ingenuity of the sages. Every one of us would realise different shades of meaning for the same words or chapter at different point of time.

I seek your indulgence to condone any indiscretion on my part in this divine adventure.

INTRODUCTION

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Ramayana is not a mere compilation but a compendium of human emotions at its play, code of adorable conduct of the characters in the midst of hardships, the subtlety through which the cardinal eternal principles of life which are narrated. In fact, it acts as a palliative to the seekers of tranquillity.

Lord Narayana who originally imparted the Vedic knowledge to Brahma found that the real import of the His teachings have not been understood properly. Instead, people placed lopsided importance on the portion related to the performance of sacrifices for individual ambitions. They went astray from the Lord and never tried to understand purpose of their existence on the earth. This led to the incarnation of Lord Narayana due to his causeless compensation towards human beings.

People of India always adore, relish and enact Sri Krishna's childhood pastimes along with the like-minded devotees. On the other hand, Shri Rama's life is a testimony to the trials and tribulations. He had silently borne many calamities of the extreme nature which normal mortal beings dare to undergo even in dreams.

Even a casual reader of Ramayana and Shri Rama's life could not help suffering once he realises that Sri Rama had endured hardship despite being none other than Lord Narayana himself but strictly adhered to the Dharma of the human beings as enunciated in Vedas.

Millions of people put their faith on Shri Rama and He always listen to His devotees. He could have easily prolonged the life of his father for the exile period of 14 years. He didn't do that. Similarly, there are many occasions where he could have taken recourse to do a work in a short and swift manner without putting himself into untold miseries. He endured the separation of his spouse Sita Devi who is none other than Goddess Lakshmi who in turn underwent difficulties and painful miserable life for about a year in captivity at Lanka. Maharishi Valmiki through the utterances of Marci and later through Hanuman writes that had Sita thought of eliminating Ravana, she could have done it by her mere mental resolution and

he would have been consigned to fire. But she didn't do it. She also silently underwent the sorrowful life in Lanka blaming herself. The most tragic part of the entire episode is that she has to live with it and unnecessary accusations even later times about her stay at Lanka. This has ultimately resulted in her retreat to the bosom of mother Earth.

Valmiki Ramayana is an article of faith to say the least. It is replete with the appropriate conduct of people as sons, as brothers, as parents, as friends, as kings, as ministers, as people in the kingdom. It clearly express that every one of us can never escape the resultant effect for the action done by us, to repose one's faith in Almighty for the alleviation of sufferings, beneficial act by the Almighty would, slowly but surely, occur through unexpected turn of events, help from entirely unrelated beings from different walk of life, treading on the path of truthfulness, righteousness etc would never go waste.

At the level of literature scrutiny and historical point of view, it also throws light on economic prosperity of the regions, social conditions, melodious song with appealing tone, tune, customs and practice prevalent during the period, some of which could be seen in vogue even now. In short, it contains numerous quotable quotes of immense value to us.