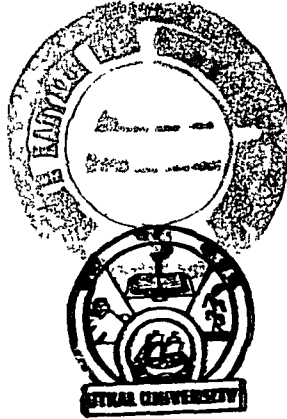


**NATURE OF VALUES IN THE
VĀLMĪKI RĀMĀYAṆA**



**THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE UTKAL UNIVERSITY
FOR THE FULFILMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(ARTS)**

Nirmala Nayak

SEPTEMBER - 1985

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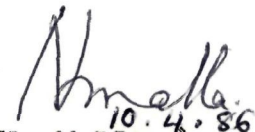
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Certified that the thesis entitled "The Nature of Values in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa" submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts (Sanskrit) to the Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, embodies the results of the bonafied research work carried out by Miss Nirmala Nayak under my guidance and supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or diploma. Any help of source of information, availed in this connection is duly acknowledged.


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This work is but an humble offering at the feet of the Lord, without whose benign grace the work could not perhaps see the light of the day.

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My obligation to all my family members shall remain ever unpaid but for whose sacrifices I could not think of higher studies. I painfully remember my father today, who is no more, who would rejoice most to see the little work of mine; whose ideals I, always cherish and imbibe.

I cannot forget Mr. Joseph F. Khongbuh for his involvement, sincerity, neat and flawless typing of the dissertation within a stipulated time.

Nirmala Nayak
NIRMALA NAYAK

TRANSLITERATION

Vowels	- a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ṛ, ṝ, e, ai, o, au
anusvāra	- ṁ
visarga	- ḥ
<u>Consonants</u>	
gutturals	- k, kh, g, gh, ṅ
palatals	- c, ch, j, jh, jñ
cerebrals	- ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ
dentals	- t, th, d, dh, n
labials	- p, ph, b, bh, m
semi vowels	- y, r, l, v
sibilants	- s, ś, ṣ
aspirate	- h

ABBREVIATIONS

- A. K - Ayodhyā Kānda
Ar. K - Aranya Kānda
B. K - Bāla Kānda
K. K - Kiskindhā Kānda
S. K - Sundara Kānda
U. K - Uttara Kānda
Y. K - Yuddha Kānda
Pra. - Prakṣipta
JOIB - Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda.
JAOS - Journal of the American Oriental Society, New
Haven, Baltimore.
B.V.B - Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
JRAS - Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London.
JAI - Journal of Asiatic, India.
JIH - Journal of Indian History, Kerala University,
Trivandrum.

FOREWORD

The present work is an humble attempt to explore and analyse the values enshrined in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. In other words, it aims at spelling out in details the ethics of the Rāmāyaṇa. As this work is text based; all the observations and criticisms are substantiated by the relevant verses from the text. The Critical Edition on Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa has been consulted all through. Since the verses have been quoted for thematic corroboration, the literal translation of them has not been attempted. We regret certain typographical omissions in respect of the diacritical marks.

10. 4. 86

Nirmala Nayak
NIRMALA NAYAK

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The present study undertakes to explore, spell out and critically examine the values enshrined in the Rāmāyaṇa. In a way, it can be treated as a critique of values.

Values can be studied in many ways. The anthropologists, the historians take interest in study of values. They give us descriptive account of value systems of different communities or societies. This sort of study is empirical in nature. It tells about the growth and evolution of value systems prevalent in different communities.

But a philosophical study of values is different from its empirical counterpart. A philosophical study of value does not raise questions regarding growth and evolution of value systems, rather it raises questions relating to meaning and justification.

Different philosophical theories have been advanced regarding the nature of values. Pragmatism, utilitarianism and idealism (absolutism) are some of these theories. The utilitarians maintain that values are of utilities. That is to say, values are of a kind of instruments. They are means to certain ends. The pragmatists treat values purely as means. The idealists or the absolutists treat values as ultimate or as the ultimate ends.

We wish to argue out that (i) values, per se, cannot be instrumental; they have to be ultimate or absolute, and (ii) the Rāmāyana upholds a system of absolute values. Further, we wish to argue in this connection that the so called instrumental values can be made intelligible only in the light of absolute values.

The Rāmāyana is a sacred text of the Hindus. The superb creation of the master mind is dominantly didactic. Its appeal is universal and it's message transcends the limitations of time and clime. The recital of the Rāmāyana or ardent listening to it, is deemed to be a means to salvation, the summum bonum of human life. In Indian villages one still comes across people sitting together and listening to the story of Rāma told by the priest or the professional reciters (Pārāyanis). The influence of the Rāmāyana is clearly discernible from the day to day lives and the code of conduct of the Hindus. Most of the social festivals, popular ballads, village songs, music, dance, drama, proverbs, legends and even commonplace advices revolve around the theme and the morals of the Rāmāyana. This goes to indicate the extent to which the Rāma story has permeated the fabric of social life of the Hindus. The popularity and currency of the Rāma story is not only

confined to the Indian continent but extends into the far east and the south east Asian countries. Macdonell remarks;

"Probably no work of world literature, secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of the people as the Rāmāyana."¹

Winternitz observes,

"The Rāmāyana has become the property of the whole Indian people, and scarcely any other poem in the entire literature of the world has influenced the thought and poetry of a great nation for centuries."²

It is needless to recount the significant contributions made in the study and analysis of the text by scholars of different disciplines from various perspectives. The Indologists, Sanskrit scholars, culture historians and sociologists have evinced keen interest in the Rāmāyana from their respective angles of vision. But unfortunately the text could not somehow get the due attention of the philosophers. In particular, as far as we know, no serious philosophical reflection on the Rāmāyana has been done from the contemporary philosophical standpoint. The Rāmāyana is a seamless ocean. This work shall but be an humble attempt to philosophically

1. "A History of Sanskrit Literature" - A.C. Macdonell, p.

2. "A History of Indian Literature" - Winternitz, p.

reflect on one segment of it, i.e. the values. The Rāmāyana is considered to be the Mahāpurāṇa, i.e. the Purāṇa of high water mark. Apart from other characteristics, the principal overtone of a Purāṇa is didactic. It aims at propagation of values for the moral regeneration or upliftment of the society, at large. The Rāmāyana could not be an exception. It is rather a superb specimen of the Purāṇic literature. It is a store house of values. The values embedded in it are universal and therefore, could afford a positive solution to the ills or the crisis of today which is essentially the crisis of character and values. An humble attempt will be made to explore the nature of values in the Rāmāyana and to reconstruct the types of values enjoined in the text. The method to be adopted to this end, will be the philosophical method of interpretation, i.e. the hermeneutic method (to borrow the term from the German philosophical tradition). "Hermeneutic" literally means interpretation. So the hermeneutic method means the method of interpreting the text irrespective of the socio-political backdrop or historical antecedents. It takes into account the meanings and significance of the text under study. The Rāmāyana of Vālmīki, with all its seven volumes, stands for certain meanings and ideas having ethical or moral implications of paramount significance. We would like to

enunciate and bring to the bold relief their inter connectedness. That is why, we will not enter into the controversies as to whether all the seven volumes were originally composed by Vālmīki or some of them are extrapolations. Even if there be extrapolations; (as there is a widely held view that a portion of Bālākānda and the whole of Uttarā Kānda are later additions) it would not tell upon the merit of the investigation; as the Rāmāyaṇa, with its seven volumes presents a thematic unity and symmetry.

There has been a long standing controversy as to the literary status of the Rāmāyaṇa. Some construe it as an Epic or Mahā Kāvya and others consider it as a Purāṇa. By and large, it is deemed as the first poetic composition in the oriental literary tradition and therefore is accorded the status of the "Ādi Kāvya." In fact, the Rāmāyaṇa has been taken as a parameter in defining the characteristics of Kāvya or Epic.

"In its scope, the epic ranges freely and with authority over the natural and human order, over history and legend, and even over the fantastic and supernatural worlds. The epic is responsive to, yet finally transcends, the ethos of its time and place. Its most distinctive characteristics are heroic action, the celebration of human greatness, and the encounter between the hero's greatness and his mortality."¹

1. Encyclopaedia Americana, Vol. 10, p.500.

"An epic may deal with such various subjects as myths, heroic legends, histories, edifying religious tales, animal stories, or philosophical or moral theories. Epic poetry has been used by people all over the world and in different ages to transmit their traditions from one generation to another..."¹

Adjudged by the above criteria, the Rāmāyaṇa can, quite befittingly be treated as an epic as it revolves around the exploits of Rāma through portrayal of his unusual prowess, nobility of heart, magnanimity of mind, representing him as the ideal son, the ideal brother, the ideal husband and the ideal King. Similarly, the ideals of motherhood and wife have been well projected through the characters of Kauśalyā, Sītā, Tārā, and Mandodari, respectively. Sir Monier William observes,

"There are in the whole range of the world's literature few more charming poems than the Rāmāyaṇa. The classical, purity, clearness and simplicity of its style, the exquisite touches of true poetic feeling with which it abounds, its graphic description of heroic incidents and of nature's grandest scenes; the deep acquaintance displayed with conflicting working and most refined emotions of the human heart - all entitle it to rank among the most beautiful compositions that have appeared at any period and in any country."²

-
1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 6, p. 906.
 2. History of Sanskrit Literature - M. William, p.

On the other hand, the term Purāṇa literary means "ancient" and 'Purāṇa' therefore signifies the text representative of ancient tradition. It is a treatise,

"...expounding ancient Indian theogony, cosmogony, genealogies and accounts of kings and rsis, religious belief, worship, observances, and philosophy, personal and social and political ordinances, and opinions about all kinds of miscellaneous matters the whole illustrated and enforced by tales, legends, old songs, anecdotes and fables."¹

Purāṇa being a representative of the oriental tradition and culture is defined as a piece of literature wedded to promote Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa, the four basic pursuits and values of human life. Weighed by the above criteria the Rāmāyaṇa can also be taken as a Purāṇa or a Mahā Purāṇa. It is not only a mouthpiece of the oriental cultural milieu but, as mentioned above, contains theogony, cosmogony, genealogies and accounts of kings and Ṛṣis, religious belief etc. As Vālmīki himself relates in Bāla Kānda, the reading of Rāmāyaṇa would ensure the attainment of three Vargas, namely - Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (Wealth) and Kāma (Love).

"Tadidaṁ vartayisyā^h sarvaṁ nikhilamāditaḥ
Dharmakāmārthasahitaṁ śrotavyamonasuyatā." ²

-
1. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 10, p.447.
 2. B.K., 5-4.

The Rāmāyana is an omnibus, as it were. Apart from being a high piece of literature, it contains anecdotes, legends, myths, values, the heroic exploits and various other miscellaneous things. The amorphous character of the text lends it to be classified as an epic or Purāṇa depending on the interest or the criteria at hand. Hence, the above controversy seems to rest on the logic of classification. The Rāmāyana is composed in 'Anustuph' metre. The style of the narrative is simple and the diction is commonplace. It is replete with similes, metaphors, figures of speech culled from the common parlance. The hyperboles and the grandiose style render it more persuasive and sharpens the sense of empathy in the reader or the listener. As Vālmiki himself professes, the treatise presents different 'Rasas' or sentiments like - Srṅgāra, Vira, Raudra, Karuṇa, Krodha, Adbhuta, Hāsya, Bhayānaka, Sānta etc., but it is too obvious to stress that the Karuṇa or pathos is the principal overtone or the chief cadence of the epic. As Sadhu Ram observes,

"The Rāmāyana is not merely a narrative poem of the history of the life of Rāma but is also considered to be the first ornate poem of Classical Sanskrit. At the end of every canto, it is called an ādi Kāvya (Iti ādi-kāvyē prathamah sargaḥ, etc). The division of later court epic (Mahā-Kāvya) into cantos (sarga) is based on the model of the Rāmāyana. The main object of a poem is to afford aesthetic pleasure which is technically called (Rasa) by the Sanskrit rhetoricians. From that point of view, the Rāmāyana is predominantly a poem of Pāthos (Karuṇa-Rasa)."1

We need not dwell upon the literary merit of the text as that would be falling beyond the purview of the present study, but it would suffice here to observe that Vālmīki summons all his literary acumen to portray certain paradigms of values.

"Let not glory attend thee, O fowler! for eternal years to come, for thou hast killed one of the pair of curlews infatuated with love."

The Pity turned into poesy - Śokāt Ślokaḥ Āgataḥ.

"Mā niṣāda pratiṣṭhamtvamagamah sāsvatih samāhā
Yat kraunchamithuanādekā^om^odhī kāmamohitam."¹

The story goes that Brahmā appears in the scene immediately thereafter, reveals him the Rāma story in its entirety and asks him to compose the poem on the same pattern. Quite congruous with this, runs the view that Rāmāyaṇa was written much before Rāma's birth. Prima facie, it sounds absurd to suppose that the biography of one could be written before his actual birth. But it can be taken as quite significant from the following consideration. Truth is eternal. Hence it is uncreated and **ifso** facto, indestructible. Truth is not made but discovered. It is only the sages and seers that have the appropriate knack and sensibility to perceive the truth.

"Rṣayah Mantra draṣṭārah."

1. B.K. 11-15.

But the contemporary philosophers like Gilbert Ryle and others would object to this kind of thesis in observing that there can be meaningful and true propositions, only with regard to the past and present but not with regard to the future. Hence all our knowledge-claims are limited to past and present. But the Indian tradition bears testimony to the concept of eternal presence (Śāsvata Varttamāna) and the omniscience of the seers which consist in their capacity to foresee events that are yet to happen. This obviously betrays a deterministic world view on the part of the the-then thinkers. Thus, under this supposition one can find meaning in the propositions relating to future events. Truth is eternal and therefore tenseless. Whatever happens was to happen and whatever is to happen shall happen. The so called distinction between past, present and future, though practically expedient, proves to be ultimately indefensible. It is also held by some that Valmiki happened to be a contemporary of Rāma. Rāma visited Valmiki's hermitage in course of his exile and Sītā, having been banished by the King Rāma, also finds refuge in the Āshrama of Vālmiki. Vālmiki's close association with Rāma might have given him incentive to compose the classic. There are also some who opine that the Rāma story was in currency in form of popular stories, legends or hearsays and the poet employs it to suit his narrative ends.

There have been attempts to trace the historicity of the Rāmāyana in seeking to locate Rāma's Ayodhyā and Rāvāna's Lankā and thereby to reconstruct the ancient Indian history and civilisation. Jacobi considers the Rāmāyana as a blending of history and Vedic myth. He accords historicity to the palace intrigues and the exile but the stories relating to abduction of Sītā and killing of Rāvāna are said to have been incorporated from the mythological narrations in the R̥g Veda. The presence of Rāma story in the passages of the Daśaratha Jātaka of the Buddhist literature has led some scholars to conclude that Rāmāyana is pre-Buddhistic in origin. But in Jātaka story Sītā has been described as Rāma's sister and there is no mention of abduction of Sītā and the Rāma-Rāvāna conflict. From this, it is surmised that the Daśaratha Jātaka is a perverted account of the Rāma story. It would not be out of place here, to leave a word of caution to those who seek to trace the historicity of the Rāmāyana. The Rāmāyana is not a history. But as any work of art is bound to reflect the economic, political and social climate of the contemporary age one could also, to a certain degree, reconstruct the same from it and thus treat it as a source book of history. However, it falls beyond the domain of the present study; though it is, otherwise, worth investigating.

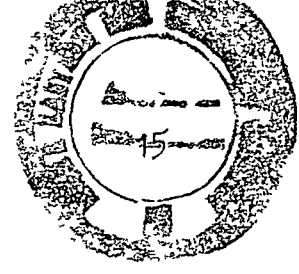
The Purāṇas are said to be expository of five distinct themes namely, Sarga (Creation), Pratisarga (dissolution and recreation), Manvantara (the periods of the Manus), Vamsa (ancient genealogies) and Vamsyānucarita (accounts of persons mentioned in the genealogies). The first two constitute the core of the Purāṇic metaphysics. Sarga and Pratisarga in fact, bear reference to creation (Sṛṣṭi), perservation (Sthiti) and dissolution (Pralaya). Sthiti or the state of existence can be made intelligible only in reference to the "why" and "how" of the creation, preceding it and in reference to dissolution or Pralaya which inevitably follows it. Sṛṣṭi, Sthiti and Pralaya cannot be understood in isolation. To understand one is to understand the other two. These three again are intelligible by an appeal to the inexorable cosmic laws or Ṛta that determine the totality. This is not only the metaphysics of the Rāmāyaṇa but also of all the Purāṇas. A close perusal of the Purāṇas would reveal that the curses, hopes and aspirations of the previous life fructify in form of actual event in the later lives. How to understand them? Are they mere figments of imagination? Can we dismiss them as high flights of imagination or cock and bull stories or are they impregnated with deep meaning? We wish to suggest and argue out the latter in course of the dissertation.

The contemporary sociological literature draws a distinction between text and context. But in the Rāmāyaṇa the text and context appear to have been fused into a synthetic unity. The universal laws constitute the text and the actual events; the context. The context can be understood only in terms of the text or the universal laws. But the text remains a metaphysical abstraction without the context which are but actual instantiations of the text. They present both microcosm and the macrocosm together giving the impression as if, the entire drama was divinely preordained. For example, Dasara's preparation for Yajna in expectation of a son synchronises with the Gods' solicitations to Brahmā to be born in human form to put an end to the conceited, malicious and the arrogant demon king, Rāvaṇa. This, together with other suggestions, go to indicate that the ways of the macrocosm or the Divine, ultimately, prevails and the microcosms are mere puppets. Microcosms have no choice but to conform to the Providential decree.

'Value' is a prime necessity of a corporate living. It is the values and norms that define and regulate the conduct of an individual in a collective life. A healthy society presupposes cohesion in social life. This again calls for

the patterning of human conduct in different spheres of life in accordance with certain norms or values. In philosophical literatures of the West one comes across prolific writings on the normative and the meta-normative theories of morality. The normative theories provide different standards of "good" and "right" whereas the meta normative theories dwell upon the nature of the "good" and "moral valuation." Except the theologians like Saint Augustine and Aquinas who define good in terms of the will of God and the idealists like Bradley who define the highest good in terms of self realisation; the tendency; by and large, in the West is to define values in terms of relative interests and purposes of the individuals in particular and the society in general. But when we turn to the Oriental tradition there appears to be a significant departure from the Western way of thinking, (which for all intents and purposes is based on materiality or pragmatic considerations) in so far as, the former construes values to be absolute and eternal (Śāśvata).

In this perspective, the Rāmāyaṇa can be taken as a specimen representing the pristine values enshrined in the tradition and cultural milieu of the country. It is obviously not a theoretic exercise on the concept of morals



nor does it contain the abstract moral principles to be unconditionally and mechanically adhered to by the individuals. But it can quite befittingly be taken as a source book of values as it seeks to propagate values by concretising them through characters in actual human situations.

"It is not a mere narration of conflicts and battles, but contains the highest ideals of political and social life as well as religious ordinances and practices prevailing in that remote age. In this epic poem, the gods have not come down as men, but men, by dint of their virtues, have become gods."¹

The extra-ordinary finesse of sage Vālmīki in character portrayal reveals his primary concern in bringing home the eternal values through the use of parables and narrations. One finds in Rāma a happy amalgamation of all the cherished ideals of a King (Rāja Dharma), of a son (Putra Dharma), of a husband (Svāmi Dharma), of a brother (Bhrātr̥ Dharma) and can discover in Sītā, Kauśalyā, Tārā and Mandodari the ideals of a wife (Stree Dharma). Sumantra, Guhaka, Bharadvāja, Jatāyu, Sampāti, Sabari, Hanuman, typify the ideals of a subject (Prajā Dharma or Sevaka Dharma). There is also the delineation of the ideal friendship (Mitra Dharma) among Rāma and Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa. The uniqueness of the poet

1. Essays on Sanskrit Literature - Sadhu Ram, p.

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consists in portraying the characters not as Gods or supra-human species but as beings with flesh and blood embodying the highest ideals that the mankind could emulate. The didactic effect of the narration is heightened by the fact that the poet does not forget to invest the characters with the human frailties. Rāma the most calm and circumspect also breaks down in grief with the separation of Sītā as is evident from the following expressions -

"Yaṁ vinā notsahe vīra muhurtamapi jivituṁ
Kva sā prāṇasahāyā me Sītā surasutoṣamā."¹

And Sītā the soft, well meaning and tolerant character also does not mince words to castigate and throw aspersions on so devoted and ideal brother like Lakṣmaṇa when the latter shows his reluctance to leave Sītā alone.

"Lovatmākrute nunam nānugachati Rāghavaṁ
Vyasanaṁ te priyaṁ manye sneho bhrātari nāstite."²

The Rāmāyaṇa can be taken as representative or mouth-piece of Indian culture and heritage. One finds in it the continuity and explicit corroboration of the Vedic themes and Upaniṣadic ideals. Valmīki, in course of his character portrayal invokes the Upaniṣadic themes like Rta and

1. Ar. K, 58-4.

2. Ar. K, 45-7.

and Karma. Ṛta signifies the inviolable cosmic order. There exist the irrevokable and eternal principles that govern not only the circumbabulation of the planets in their fixed orbit, the cycle of seasons, i.e. the physical events but also the action-reaction nexus. Everything animate and inanimate are subject to these laws. This stems from the Upaniṣadic world view that all the things and beings i.e., all the existents or evolutes in the creation, are but varied manifestations of the Brahman. There has been explicit thematic corroboration of this when the characters, symbolizing righteousness, are bent upon living in conformity with the eternal laws or the laws of Dharma, lest the violation of those might bring them to hell. Daśaratha, despite his heart rending agony at the thought of sending Rāma to the exile and of the gross infamy, thereof, ultimately succumbs to the machinations of Kaikeyī for, he finds himself fettered by the moral principle that once a promise is made has to be meted out; whatever may be the price. Tulsī Dās brings it out most elegantly,

"Pran jāye par vacan nā jāye."

Rāma displays the height of sublimation of character in his dialogues with father Daśaratha, mother Kauśalyā and brother Lakṣmaṇa in pleading for going to the forest

as it is most becoming on the part of the son to translate the wishes of the father. Again, while the preparations to lead the army across the ocean were afoot Rāma implores the ocean God to make way for them. Finding that his entreaties remain unheeded Rāma takes his bow and is about to crush the ocean God for his supposed apathy at Rāma's plight, when, the latter appears embodied exhorting Rāma as to his inability and helplessness to transgress the eternal laws. How could liquid be solidified? How could water change its Dharma? This bears an eloquent testimony to the doctrine of Rta.

"Svabhābe saumya tisthanti sāsvatam mārgamāsritāḥ
Tatsvabhābo mamāpyosa yadgādhoḥamplabāḥ."¹

The belief in the laws of Karma is also distinctive of the Upaniṣadic thought. The notion Karma signifies that the actions of a human being are not solitary events unconnected with its past or having no bearing on the future but belongs to the causal sequence of the action-reaction series. An action good or bad generates the appropriate reactions or the Śaṁskāras. Depending on its merit; an action, is bound to be followed by the appropriate consequences. No wicked action goes unpunished and no virtuous action remains

1. Y. K, 20-26.

unrewarded. Daśaratha's admission that his ignoble plight might be due to the curse of the old and the helpless father of Śravaṇa Kumār; displays his tacit belief in the law of Karma. Rāma, while explaining to his mother Kauśalyā and brother Lakṣmaṇa about the queer conduct of Kaikeyī whom he adored from the heart of heart, argues that she must have been under the spell of some evil forces and it is a sheer play of destiny to which she has fallen a prey. This reveals the fatalistic undertone of the epic and goes to suggest the limitations of human beings when pitted against the hands of Providence.

The historicity of the Rāmāyaṇa apart; it can be taken as symbolic of fight between good and evil and the ultimate triumph of the former over the latter. Rāma symbolizes all that is good, humane and the sterling qualities of head and heart. One finds an ideal son, an ideal husband, an ideal brother, an ideal friend, an ideal king in him. Similarly, Rāvaṇa, on the contrary, typifies all that is negative, base, immoral and evil. In spite of his knowledge, valour and the uncanny capacity in affairs of war and administration, one finds him a despot, a self flattered egoist and a lesser mortal falling a victim to his lower

passions and instincts. His is the plight of a 'Superman' who falls a prey to the frailities, in spite of oneself. The prolonged suffering of Rāma, Sitā, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, only, go to bring home the truth that goodness suffers in the hands of the evil but that it eventually glories over the evil is, conclusively, testified by the extermination of Rākṣasas, Vāli, Rāvaṇa etc.

There have been explicit references to heaven and hell though Vālmīki is, ghastly, silent about "Mokṣa," which is construed to be the most important of the four Purusārthas (Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa). But one should be on the guard, in not interpreting heaven and hell as having spatial connotations, in spite of the suggestions to the contrary. The Rāmāyaṇa being an epic is committed to the propagation of values. It evidently aims at catering to the needs of the people at large. Hence, it has got to cash upon the myths, legends, beliefs afloat in common parlance. The heaven and hell can be interpreted as explicative of the law of Karma preventing people from doing bad because of the fear of eternal damnation in the supposed hell and urging people to do good for the prospect of attaining the supposed heaven.

Gods or the supernatural forces who are found to be solicitous before Brahmā for the annihilation of Rāvaṇa, the evil incarnate, are also seen to assist Rāma in his expedition against Rāvaṇa and rejoice over the latter's heroic defeat. This corroborates the moral order of the universe.

The Rāmāyana has also been treated as representative of ideological conflict between the Āryans and the Non-Āryans. According to Shrii Anandamurtii, the author of Namaḥ-Sivāya-Santāya, the Non-Āryans are the indigenous population of the country and represent the Tāntric tradition which is native to this soil. The Āryans who migrated to the country from the Central Asia through Iran and Modern Afghanistan had a culture, distinctive of their own. They were nomads steeped in the art of warfare. On their arrival, apart from the physical conflict, that ensued between the two races, what is of paramount importance is the incompatibility or the conflict of cultural traditions. The Āryans were basically the worshippers of Nature and had the implicit belief in the performance and efficacy of Yajnas for the propitiation of the Gods and Goddesses presiding over the various aspects of Nature. On the contrary, the Non-Āryans were Monists and believed in the futility of the ostentious practices and preferred the internal contemplation on the Infinite. Their

positive distaste for the Āryan way of life might have led to their animosity and the consequent revolt against them. It has led some to surmise that the Rāmāyaṇa which was composed by Vālmīki is but a mouthpiece of the Āryan culture and thereby, displays a partisan interest. Vālmīki seems to decry the depredation of the Asuras who are bent upon destroying the Yajnas. But that the Asuras were also steeped in Tantra and had supernatural powers, is very much explicit from the narrations in the Epic. The description of the physiognomy of the Asuras give us an impression that they were the Non-Aryans but it would be a gross mistake to think so. The demons were not necessarily the Non-Aryans. Rāma was against the evil forces who were bent upon disturbing the peace loving seers devoted to the life of contemplation in the forest. They were, probably, the forces that were engaged in Avidyā Tantra (which consists in acquiring supernormal powers through certain practices for the gratification of baser passions and perpetration of their designs).

From the above, all that stands out is that the Rāmāyaṇa advocates the absolute and the pristine values appropriate to the different offices of the individual.

Though it is composed against a social backdrop which is different from that of today and a political set up which was monarchical, its relevance is not diminished in the changed circumstances. The values delineated, therein, are still, viable today.

CHAPTER - II

RĀJA DHARMA

The Rāmāyana is composed in and reflects an age where the socio-economic and politico-religious conditions were quite different from that of today. But, its message and relevance remain unsullied by changes in time and space. It enunciates values that are most universal and enduring. Humanity today is threatened by the erosion of values, crisis of character and collapse of institutions. If properly heeded to, the Rāmāyana may go a long way in salvaging man from an imminent ruin. Hence it is imperative to unearth and reconstruct the suggestions implicit, therein.

As suggested earlier, the Rāmāyana can be taken as a source book of History visualising, in retrospect, the the-then socio-economic and politico-religious set up. Here, one gets an immaculate picture of a Monarchical order of administration. The subjects were by and large loyal, law abiding and peace loving. The office of the Monarch was considered to be sacred and divinely ordained. Though the Monarch was sovereign with all the powers vested in him, it was constitutional and most democratic in spirit. One comes across several instances where the king summons his assembly of counsellors or learned preceptors before taking any decision

with regard to matters involving his person or the State. This has also the implicit suggestion that the learned and the virtuous were enjoying royal patronage. Daśaratha, before making arrangements for the ensuing sacrament to appease Brahmā for being blessed with a son, solicits the advice and guidance of Vaṣiṣṭha, the family preceptor (Kula Guru). Again, when, in view of his old age and incapacity he made up his mind to enthrone Rāma, the eldest of his sons as his successor (according to the law of primogeniture), he orders to convene the assembly, seeks the consensus and the ratification of the wise and the farsighted for his decision with regard to Rāma's coronation. Vaṣiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Kātyāyana, Jābāla and others are found to figure in the epic as the venerated royal counsellors, pre-eminent on account of their spiritual and moral excellence. The significance of this practice is well brought out by a striking contrast when Vālmīki portrays Rāvaṇa as a self-flattered, conceited, arrogant autocrat who, in his characteristic insolence, having flouted the well meaning advice of Mārīca, Vibhīṣaṇa, Nikaṣā, Mālyavān, Kumbhakarna, Mandodari, heightens his own doom. It goes to show that the king, the ruler or the administrator, in the interest of the subjects or the ruled, ought to bank upon the counsel and guidance of the expert

body as and when the occasion demands. Kumbhakarna in his maiden attempt to prevail on Rāvaṇa observes;

"Kāle dharmārthakāmāṅyaḥ saṁantrya sacivaīḥ saha
Niṣvetātṁvānloke na sa vyasanamāpnuyāt."¹

that the king who falls back on the timely advice of the ministers in pursuance of Dharma, Artha and Kāma does not court suffering or set-back.

Similarly, Mālyavān, the maternal grandfather, in his elderly concern for Rāvaṇa, struggles to make him see the Truth,

".
Sa śāsti ciramaisvaryamarīṣca kurute vaṣe."
"Sandadhāno hi kālena vigrunvascaribhiḥ saha
."²

that he who accepts the timely advice of the counsellors reigns in eternal prosperity with his enemies subdued.

Thus, it stands out that the ruler should be surrounded by the galaxy of counsellors. They are, in other words, a group of reference-individuals, well versed in the scriptures, established in morality, standing by the king in

1. Y.K. 63-12.

2. Y.K. 35- 7, 8.

matters of exigencies. In enumerating the qualities of the courtiers Rāma, while greeting Bharata observes -

"Ekopyamātyo medhāvī śuro dakṣo vicakṣaṇaḥ
Rājānaṁ rājanā^{pr}traṁ vā prāpayenmahatīm śriyaṁ"¹

that the minister, even if one; if (he is) meritorious, heroic, efficient and dynamic, can bring immense prosperity to the king.

Rāvaṇa is surrounded by satellites of psychopants who pander to his baser ego by extolling his prowess. Rāvaṇa, the self-flattered tyrant turns down with utter insolence the advice of his well wishers. Mārīca is threatened with dire consequences in the attempt to dissuade Rāvaṇa from pursuing his nefarious and suicidal designs. Vibhīṣaṇa is accused of insincerity and envy, characteristic of one at the prospects of his kinsmen. Rāvaṇa does not entertain; rather takes exception to a counsel unless it is endearing and conducive to his native design.

"Sampraṣṭhena tu vaktavyaṁ sacivena vipaścītā
Udyatānjalinā rājne ya ichedbhūtimātmanaḥ."²

-
1. A.K. 100-25
 2. Ar. K. 40-9.

On the other hand, Rāma is seen to turn down with all harshness and sarcasm the suggestions of Jābāli not to undertake penance for a cause which is worth nothing (even though it was favourable to his immediate good) by observing,

"Ṛsayascaiva devāsca satyameva hi menire
 Satyavadī hi lokesmin^{ca}param^{ca} gachati kṣayam"
 "Sohaṁ piturniyogaṁ tu kimarthaṁ nānupālaye
 Satyapratīśravaḥ satyaṁ satyena samayīkṛtam"¹

He says that he would rather embrace noble ones that have sacrificed them for the cause of Dharma and **Satya** rather than the inferiors. This shows by contrast how the evil counselling of the courtiers and subordinates of Rāvaṇa coupled with his uncompromising egotism, quickens his ruination and that of his dominion.

Vālmīki appears to be quite exhaustive and eloquent in delineating the essential virtues of a king in relation to the subjects.

"Rājā satyaṁ ca dharmasca
 Rājā kulavatām kulam
 Rājā mātā pitā caiva
 Rājā hitakaro nr̥ṇām."²

1. A. K. 10-9-11, 16

2. A. K. - 67-34.

The king verily is the truth, the dharma, the symbol of racial dignity, the father, mother and the agent of peoples' well being. This introduces one to the sacred relationship between the ruler and the ruled quite alien to the various institutions of modern statecraft. The king, instead of being conceived as a sovereign far removed from and inaccessible to the commoners is, supposed to serve as the trustee, the custodian of the people and the state. The analogy, likening the office of the king to that of a father and mother is highly suggestive.

The power of the king consists not in the size of the army or richness of armoury, but in his steadfastness in adhering to Dharma. When Viśvāmitra having been actuated by greed asks for Kāmadhenu and Vaśiṣṭha demurs to comply to his wish on the score that it was his only asset and the most prized possession, the former orders the army for the forceful seizure of the cow. This leads to a pitched battle between the army of the Viśvāmitra and those summoned into existence by the divine powers of Kāmadhenu. Eventually, finding him totally crushed, Viśvāmitra acknowledges the efficacy and superiority of the powers of Dharma over that of the physical strength.

"Dhigvalam̄ Kṣatriyavalam̄ Brahmatejo valam̄ valam̄
 "1

The Viśvāmitra-Vaśiṣṭha episode also brings home the morale that the king should be above avarice. Viśvāmitra claims that he, by virtue of being the sovereign, owns all the property of his dominion (Ratnahārica Pārthiva) and consequently pays price in terms of humiliation and defeat.

For the ruler, Dharma signifies the cardinal principles which ought to serve as the watchword and the highest court of appeal in dispensing the affairs of the State. The king, being the source of Dharma and victory should preserve it (Dharma) at all costs.

"Rājamūlo hi dharmas̄ca jaḡas̄ca jayatām̄ vara
 Tasmāt sarvāsuava^{la}sthāsu rakṣitavyā narādhipāḡ."2

The king ought to rule the state, joyfully, by taking refuge in Dharma which is sure to fortify him against all odds.

".
 Dharmeṇa rāṣṭram̄ vindeta dharmeṇaivānupālayet"
 Dharmātsaranyatām̄ yāti rājā sarvabhayāpahḡ
 "3

1. B.K. 56-23.
 2. Ar. K. 41-10.
 3. U.K. Pra. 2-14, 15.

Dharma protects its preserver (Dharmaḥ Rakṣati Rakṣitaḥ), when the Ruler rules in consonance with the tenets of Dharma, he in turn, secures immunity by Dharma. But by acting conversely he only precipitates the ruination of his subjects.

"Nityā sunītayā rājā dharmam rakṣati rakṣitā
Jadā na pālayedrājā kṣipram naśyanti vai prajāḥ."¹

The entire narration bears an eloquent testimony to the conflict between Dharma and Adharma, Righteousness and Evil and the eventual triumph of the former over the latter. The characters, wedded to Dharma suffer and suffer while the evil gains a temporary ascendance and ultimately matures into its own extermination. The heart rending agony of Daśaratha and his death from the pangs of separation, Rāma's prolonged suffering, Sītā's never ending trials, Jatāyu's ultimate sacrifice at the altar of Dharma, the uncalled for torture of Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa's humiliation, go to indicate that the righteous forces have invariably, to pay price in terms of torture, suffering, humiliation, defeat and even laying down the life for the cause of Dharma. On the contrary, the futility of the cunning manoeuvres of Kaikeyī, Vāli's fall, the annihilation of Rāvaṇa and the Rākṣasa race bespeak of the Providential decree that the evil destroys itself and proclaim the truth that Dharma, ultimately, prevails.

1. U.K. Pra 2-6.

Vālmīki enumerates the negative virtues that the Ruler should steer clear. Rāma, in course of his advice to Bharata (when the latter fails to win, in persuading him to return to Ayodhyā to assume the throne and ultimately yields to the advice of the Vaśiṣṭha to rule as a regent king) observes,

"Nāstikyamanṛtāṁ krōdham pramādaṁ dīrghasūtratāṁ
 Adarśanaṁ jnānavatāmālasyaṁ pancavṛttitāṁ
 Ekacintanamarthānāmanarthajnaiṣca mantraṇāṁ
 Niścitanāmanārambhyaṁ mantrasyaṅparirakṣaṇāṁ
 Mangalaprāyogaṁ ca pratyuthānaṁ ca sarvataḥ
 Kaccitvaṁ varjayasvetān rājadosāṅcaturdaśaḥ."¹

The King, in the interest of the State ought to be above the shortcomings, such as, atheism, untruthfulness, anger, follies, procrastination, inattention, indolence, indulgence (in sense of gratification), taking crucial decision by oneself, seeking counsel from the evil minded, inability in timely execution of the work at hand, inability to keep secrecy, non-beginning of the auspicious work and the uncalled for humility.

1. A.K. 100-66, 67, 68.

Atheism on the part of the ruler is deemed to be a disvalue. This reveals the uniqueness of Rāja Dharma advocated in the epic. A devout faith in God, as the all pervading entity, is sure to generate an appropriate attitude in the individual towards the society and his fellow beings and more so, on the part of the administrator. Belief in God or the transcendental principle as the real agent and the ultimate dispenser of Justice (Cosmic Justice) to which the king, his subjects and even the entire universe are amenable, puts moral constraints on the administrator in doing things that are not in consonance with the principles of Dharma. Consequently the service untainted by selfishness, sacrifice, truth, justice becomes the watchword and motto for the ruler. There remains the consciousness of guilt or sin in the event of the breach of moral obligations that goad him in doing everything noble and enviable. Seen in this perspective, the king is, merely, the trustee of his kingdom committed to the protection and promotion of all and sundry. The king or the ruler is extolled as the real agent, the father and the protector of the entirety. He is the embodiment of time and eon and he verily is all the world.

"Rājā kartā ca goptā ca sarvasya jagataḥ pitā
Rājā kālo yugam caiva rājā sarvamidam jagat."¹

1. U.K. Pra 2-5.

The spiritual core of the administration is bound to percolate into the various policies and programmes that prove conducive to the good of the community. In contrast, atheism on the part of the king might make him a self-seeking despot bent upon aggression, self aggrandisement and promotion of vested interest of him, of his kinsmen or his satellite groups at the cost of the ruled. The intelligentsia, the statesmen, today have come to the painful realisation of the crisis of value and the evils of materialism in the life of the modern communities and States.

Truth, similarly, is considered to be a supreme virtue that the ruler should be wedded to. The term "truth" is quite nebulous because of its various uses in various contexts. But 'truth' in the sense of a 'value' for an administrator connotes all that is righteous and desirable. In matters of administration, truth ought to be the highest court of appeal. Truth is that, which is in keeping with the Dharma. Hence conformity to "truth" enables the ruler to administer, in enforcing discipline; in giving justice; in according favour or punishment without any bias or preference.

"Nayanāvyām prasuptopi jāgarti nayacakṣuṣā
Vyaktamkrodhaprasādaśca sa rājā pūjyate janaiḥ"¹

The above couplet enjoins that the ruler who (even if physically asleep) is ever vigilant and perceptive in meeting out justice with his anger and favour clearly pronounced, is adored by the people. Conformity to truth leaves no room for the passions and fancies to overpower the ruler in administering justice. The King, verily, is the 'truth' and 'justice' personified. Justice is the functional expressions of truth. Kumbhakarna in his advice to Rāvaṇa observes that the king who conducts his royal affairs with justice repents not afterwards -

"Yañ paścātpūrvakāryāṇi kuryādaiśvaryamāsthitaḥ
Pūrve ca^{tt} pūrvakāryāṇi na sa veda nayānayaḥ."²

Rāma exhorts Bharata to avoid inattention (Adarsana). The King by virtue of being the custodian of everyone, irrespective of the social, political and religious considerations must be sensitive enough to their weal and woe. He should share the feelings of the mass; exercise utmost respect and concern for the opinion of the populace. This is, subsequently, exemplified in the life of Rāma himself when he remains

1. Ar. K - 33-21
2. Y.K. 63-5.

unwilling to take Sītā back (after victory) because of her prolonged stay in Lankā (as it would have offended the popular sentiment) even though he was quite sanguine of Sītā's fidelity and integrity.

"Annanyamhrdayām bhaktām maccittaparivartinīm
Ahamapyā^{ba}gachāmi Maithilīm Janakātmajām."

"Pratyārtham tu lokānām trayāṇām satyaśamsrayaḥ
Upekṣe cāpi Vaidehīm pravisantīm hutāsanam."¹

Similarly, on later occasion Rāma, having learnt from Bhadra (the messenger) about the sentiment of the laity; questioning the propriety of Sītā's return to the royal household, after her stay in Lankā; banishes her to the forest to respect people's opinion, though he knew it to be unfounded and even if, it meant for him psychic torture and suffering. This goes to show that the individual wishes and personal comfort of the ruler ought to be subservient to the public morality.

"Anger" (Krodha) is decried as a positive vice more so on the part of the ruler. Anger clouds the faculty of discretion and judgement and is incompatible with the virtues like patience and self-restraint and brings with it

1. Y.K. 121-16, 17

the other attendant vices like egoism, arrogance, intolerance, hatred etc. Tārā persuades Vāli to shun anger (which overflows one like the swift current of the river) as one gives up the bed after sleep and the garland having worn it. But Vāli despite his unconquerable valour falls a victim to his wrath, as he fails to see the virtues in Sugrīva and the pertinence of Tārā's advice and courts his eventual fall.

"Sādhuḥkrodhamimam vīra nadīvegativāgataḥ
Śayanaduthitaḥ Kālyāṇ tyaja bhuktāmiva srajaḥ."¹

One finds Rāma pacifying the ill tempered Lakṣmaṇa on occasions when he comes out to take up arms against Daśaratha for his decision to send Rāma to the forest under the supposed infatuation and subsequently against Bharata when he misreads his motive during latter's procession to Citrakuta to bring back Rāma.

The ruler should be on his guard against omissions and commissions. A small irregularity on his part might spell disaster for the populace. Hence it is incumbent on him that he ought not take crucial decisions by himself but has to have an open and receptive mind in seeking counsel from the

1. K.K. 15-7.

ing Rāvaṇa's unusual physical prowess as the victor of the three worlds; his Herculean endurance at penance which makes him a recipient of Brahmā's boon; profound erudition and mastery over scriptures and uncanny diplomatic astuteness. But all these come to naught because he remains a victim of his lower self, the baser passions which make him throw to forewinds, all the tenets of Dharma in the sinister pursuit of his sordid cravings. He is a destroyer of Dharma, a seducer of women with consuming passion for erotic indulgence. Rāvaṇa blinded by passion, turns a deaf ear to Mārīca; abducts Sītā despite the latter's caustic accusations and virulent protestations. One feels pity for the Superman as he fails to countenance the singlemindedness, purity and the pristine fidelity in Sītā and grows presumptuous in denouncing Rāma as a poor ascetic forsaken by his father; seeks to win her love by holding out the temptation of material plenty and marital glory with the foolish hope that Sītā might concede by opting to be his principal queen. This, meant, not only his own ruination but the wholesale obliteration of his race. In contrast, one finds Rāma exercising utmost restraint in dissuading Sītā from accompanying him and asking Sītā to find her own ways after her stay in Lankā and banishes Sītā, in respect for the public opinion.

Lakṣmaṇa's reprobation of Sugrīva for the latter's dereliction of duty speaks eloquently that the ruler, falling a victim to amorous pursuits augurs ill for the kingdom or state. These couplets remind one of the platonic conception of the Philosopher King. Plato conceived of an ideal state administered by a ruler who must have been a philosopher, a man of non-possession, non-attachment, a person of restraint and integrity embodying height of all ethical virtues.

There are also definite suggestions about the diplomacy and state craft. The king is expected to exercise caution in non-divulgence of secrecy and to avoid the uncalled for humility. The king is supposed to be in know of the details about the goings-on in the state through competent spies. Mālyavān advises Rāvaṇa not to underestimate the enemy and disapproves of encounter with Rāma and asks him to enter into a treaty.

"

Na śatṛamavamanyeta jyāyān kurvīta vighrahaṁ

Tanmahyaṁ rocate sandhiḥ saha Rāmeṇa Rāvaṇa

. "1

1. Y.K. 35-9, 10.

The king is to pursue Sāma (principle of pacification), Dāna (munificence), Danda (punishment) and Bheda (diplomacy) depending on the exigencies of time, place and person.

Vāli in the parting scene recounts that self-restraint, extirpation of passions, forgiveness, righteousness, steadfastness, truth, prowess, suppression of the wicked as the sterling virtues of the king.

"Damaḥ śamaḥ kṣamā dharmo
Dhṛtiḥ satyaṁ parākramaḥ
Pārthivānām guṇā rājan
Dandascāpyaparādhiṣu."¹

Rāma has been depicted as 'forgiveness' incarnate. As ornaments are for women, so is the 'forgiveness' for a man. Forgiving is a hard task. Forgiveness is charity, truth, sacrifice, fame, the duty and the whole universe rests on forgiveness.

"Alankāro hi nārīnām kṣamā tu puruṣasya vā"
"Duskaram tād^{cca bai} kṣāntam tridaseṣu viśeṣataḥ
."
"Kṣamā dānam kṣamā śatyaṁ kṣamā yajñāsca putrikāḥ
Kṣamā yaśaḥ kṣamā dharmāḥ kṣamayā^mviṣṭhim jagat"²

1. K.K. 17-20
2. B.K. 33-7, 9.

It takes cognisance of human frailties and believes in the possibility of the self correction of the offender because of the largeheartedness of the forgiver.

Rāma during his exile discharges the duties as appropriate to the institution of Kṣatriya (Kṣatāt trāyate yaḥ) in suppressing the evil monger. Though reminded by Sitā that it is not becoming of him to have enmity with the Rākṣasas as it might amount to violence; quite incompatible with the life of a pious exile; Rāma argues that it is the obligatory duty of a Kṣatriya to protect the innocent against the wicked. Rāma kills the Rākṣasas like - Tātakā, Khara, Duṣaṇa etc. to ensure peace and security for the hermits which subsequently paves the way for the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa. It became, also, the enjoined duty of Rāma to kill Vāli because Sugrīva, forlorn and deprived of his legitimate rights by his arrogant and non-circumspecting brother, prays refuge in Rāma and the latter promises his due.

Rāma exhibits his steadfastness (Dhṛti) in his non-compromising gestures in observance of Dharma. Rāma's resolve to retire to the forest to translate the wishes of his father is proverbial. Rāma's resoluteness; that he may forego Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā but on no account, can he go back on the commitment made to the seers is well evident.

"Apyāham jīvitam jahyām tvām vā Site sa Lakṣamaṇām
Na tu pratijnām samsṛtya brāhmanevyeṣa viśeṣataḥ."¹

The character portrayal of Rāma also typifies the moral height in the unusual display of magnanimity of mind and renunciation. When Lakṣamaṇa chastises Kaikeyī for the cunning design; Rāma, without expressing the least sense of perturbation, gives rationale to her conduct by arguing that she must have been under the sway of some evil forces and had intended it in spite of herself. Daśaratha's advice to Rāma to usurp the throne by force heightens Rāma's moral dignity, as he prefers the observance of the words of the father to the enjoyment of wealth of the whole world. Again his insistence to go to the forest as a hermit in spite of Daśaratha's insistence to extend all the royal privileges in the forest, only, adds to his charisma. Bharata remains proverbial for his magnanimity of mind and renunciation. The excruciating agony in the minds of Bharata and his unparalleled and pure love for his brother Rāma is brought into relief through the passages in the epic. His blantant non-compliance with the advice of the counsellors to assume the throne, his journey to Citrakuta, his being eyed with suspicion by Guhaka and Bharadvāja and his innocent explanation

1. Ar. K. 10-19.

of himself add new dimension to his magnanimity, lending an element of "pathos" to the story. Again while Vibhīṣaṇa having been expelled by Rāvaṇa waits to seek the shelter of Rāma he is suspected by Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa but Rāma readily condescends to extend refuge to Vibhīṣaṇa in observing that he would even give protection to Rāvaṇa, if it is asked for.

".

Abhayaṃ sarvabhūtevyo dadāmyetaḍ vrataṃ mama"

"Anayenam hariṣreṣṭha dattamasyābhayaṃ mayā
Vibhīṣaṇo vā Sugrīva yadi vā Rāvaṇaḥ Svayaṃ"¹

The office of the king is considered most enviable and sacred. Anything, good or evil in the state is said to accrue from the king.

"Rājā dharmasca kāmasca dravyānāṃ cottamo nidhiḥ
Dharmaḥ subhaṃ vā pāpaṃ vā rājamūlaṃ pravartate."²

The king is the strength of the weak and the helpless, the eye to the eyeless, the path to the pathless.

1. Y.K. 18-33, 34.

2. Ar. K. 50-9.

"Durvalasya tu/anāthasya rājā bhavati vai valaṁ
Acakṣuṣottamaṁ cakṣuragateḥ sa gatiṛbhavān."¹

The king is deemed as indispensable for the existence of the state. In the absence of the ruler (Vasiṣṭha observes) there ensues chaos and anarchy. The state witnesses the extremities in nature, failure of crops, reign of untruth, poverty, absence of marital fidelity, state of insecurity for the righteous, martial defeat. The evil doer flourish, the right minded perish and cannibalism becomes the order of the day.

"Nārājake janapade vidyunmālī mahāsvanah
Abhivarṣati parjanya mahīm divyena vāriṇā."

"Nārājake janapade vijamuṣṭiḥ prakīryate
Nārājake pituḥ putro bhāryā vā vartate vaṣe."

"Nārājake janapade dhanavantah surakṣitah
Śerate vivṛtadvārāḥ kṛṣigorakṣajīvinah."

"Yathā hyanudakā nadyo yathā vāpyatṛṇaṁ vanam
Agopālā yathā gāvastathā rāstramarājakaṁ."

"Nārājake janapade svakaṁ bhavati kasyacit.
Matsyā iva narā nityaṁ bhakṣayanti parasparaṁ"²

The state without the king has been compared to the night without the moon and the cattle without the bull.

1. U.K. Pra. 3-23.

2. A.K. 67-9, 10, 19, 29, 31.

"Yathā candram vinā rātriyathā gavō vinā vṛṣaṃ
Eva hi bhavitā rāstraṃ yatra rājā na dṛṣyate."¹

Conversely, if the king is righteous, one does not find the voluptuous, cruel, ignorant or atheist. Men and women are self-restrained and lead a clean life in obedience to the principles of Dharma. There remains no place for the thieves, burglars, and the bastards. There exists mutual concordance among people of different walks of life. People, at large, become generous, gallant, grateful. Gods and guests get due worship.

"Kāmi vā na kadaryo vā nṛṣamsaḥ purusaḥ kvacit
Draṣṭuṃ śakyamayodhyāyāṃ nāvidvāna ca nāstikaḥ"

"Sarve narāśca nāryaśca dharmasīlāḥ susamyatāḥ
Uditāḥ sīlavṛttābhyāṃ maharsaya ivāmalāḥ"

"Nānāhitāgninaryajvā na kṣudro vā na taskaraḥ
Kaścidāsīdayodhyāyāṃ na cā ~~iv~~vṛtto sankaraḥ"

"Kṣatraṃ brahamamukhaṃ cāsīdyaiśhyāḥ kṣatramanu-
vratāḥ taha

Śūdrāḥ svadharmniratāstrīn varnānupacāriṇaḥ"

"Varneṣvagrathurtheṣu devatātithipujakāḥ
Kṛtajnāśca vadānyāśca sūrā vikramasamyuktāḥ."²

1. A.K. 14-57.

2. B.K. 6-8, 9, 12, 14, 17.

There are explicit references; according a divine or the supernormal status to the king. Though, palpably human, having been devoted to Dharma and Artha, the king is, verily the divine incarnate.

"Rājānaṃ mānuṣaṃ prāhurdevatve sa matto mama
Yasya dharmārthasahitaṃ vṛttamāhurmānuṣaṃ"¹

The king is equated with the five gods, Agni, Indra, Soma, Yama and Varūṇa, in possessing warmth (of love), valour, capacity to punish (evil) and in being agreeable and benign. Hence, he deserves unconditional loyalty and obedience.

"Panca rūpāṇi rājāno dhārayat^ṇyamitaujasah
Agnērindrasya Somasya Varūṇasya Yamasya ca."

"Auṣnyaṃ tathā vikramaṃ ca saumayaṃ dandaṃ
prasannataṃ
Dhārayanti mahātmāno rājānaḥ kṣanadācara."

"Tasmāt sarvāsvavathāsu mānyāḥ pūjyāsca Pārthivāḥ.
....."²

But the observations, above, ought not mistake one into viewing the Rāja Dharma (in the Rāmāyana) at par with the divine theory of kingship of the West. There is a world of difference between the two. The latter rests on the rationale that king, being a representative of God on the

1. A.K. 101-4.

2. Ar. K. 40-12, 13, 14.

earth. Partakes of his nature. He is the God on earth. Hence goes the norm: "The King can do no wrong." But here in the epic, though the king is portrayed as the embodiment of all divine qualities, he is considered as a mere servant of the subjects. The King is held accountable for anything good or evil, noble or sordid in the state. The demeanour or action of the King is subject to criticism and evaluation against the eternal moral principles by the select and the ruled, at large. The King is not an autocrat. He is supposed to be solicitous of the opinions and guidance of the expert body in matters of importance. It is precisely this element of accountability to the subjects and the acceptance of Dharma or Righteousness (the yardstick against which the King is adjudged) that it is distinct from its Western counterpart.

In this respect, it is worthwhile to take note of the observations, calling into question the conduct of Daśaratha in dispensing Rāma's exile.

"Dasaratha...supposedly more constitutional monarch, banishes Rāma arbitrarily, consulting no-one, and against the wishes of the populace; indeed, though the citizens openly grieve to hear the decision, and threaten to depart with Rāma, they make no direct representations to the King."¹

1. Righteous Rāma, J.L. Brockington, p.125.

The above remark seems to overlook and undermine the exigencies and the rationale necessitating the exile of Rāma. A prima facie suggestion of the episode might make one feel that Dasaratha falls a prey to the unscrupulous wiles of his youngest queen and he acts with the painful awareness of the gross violation of the law of primogeniture with cruel disregard^{for} the opinion of the learned counsellors and the innocent populace. But to think so, is to miss the very spirit or message of the epic. Dasaratha's agony at sending Rāma; (the righteous, the dearest, the part^{of} his self) to the forest, is too excruciating for expression. This is certified; in his piteous entreaties to Kaikeyī to revoke the boons in favour of more covetable ones, which obviously remain unheeded; his advice to Rāma to usurp the throne by might, which the latter would not, obviously, comply with; and by the fact that he succumbs to the dead weight of remorse and agony accruing from the separation from Rāma and the gross infamy, incurred thereby. One might, here, argue that Dasaratha, in all fitness of things could have forestalled all these by not conceding to the wishes of Kaikeyī. But it is quite significant that he could not afford to override her as that would have amounted to a greater breach of Dharma. In yielding to her wishes he exhibited his inability

to go back on his promises. Thus he finds himself fettered in the principles of Dharma. This is precisely his steadfast adherence to righteousness - which consists in being committed to one's resolve - which was exploited by Kaikeyī to her interest. To be true to one's words i.e. Truthfulness is one of the core principles, defining Dharma. It is against the basic principles that the 'morality' appropriate of the king, (for that matter, the tenets defining social moralities) are made significant. Thus, Daśaratha in conceding to Kaikeyī did, only, display his non-compromising adherence to Dharma at the cost of the secondary morality. Hypothetically, if he would have gone back on his words, Rāvaṇa would not have been killed, i.e., the evil would not have been eliminated, though to act righteously; meant Rāma's exile, his disgrace and death. It bears the unmistakable message that Dharma has to be upheld, howsoever dear may be the price.

The Rāmāyana presents the picture of a state which is most democratic. It contains the basic values of democracy 'Vox populi vox dei', the voice of the people is the voice of God. The State or the King is not an end in itself but an agency, instrumental to the good of the people. This is elucidated in Rāma's momentous decision to banish Sītā,

knowing for certain that she was pure and innocent. This conduct of Rāma was obviously not at the cost of his love and the justice nor did it mean, paying unmerited respect to the prejudiced laity, though scholars like Brockington suggest so.

"... his sacrifice of both love and justice in banishing Sītā, otherwise parallel to his father's, is made to placate his subjects' prejudice."¹

It, rather, brings out the morale that Rāma in banishing Sītā - although sanguine of her integrity and it meant the harrowing personal agony - was only sacrificing the individual morality with his utmost concern and regard for the public morality.

The ruler as a sovereign, deserves unconditional obedience from the ruled but in turn, is called upon to harness himself to the service of the populace.

"Dharmapālo janaysāsyā śaraṇyas^{ca} mahāyasāḥ
Pujanīyasca mānyasca rājā danḍadharo gurūḥ."

"Indrasyeha caturbhāgaḥ prajā rakṣati Rāghava
Rājā tasmācvarān bhogān bhunkte lokanamaskṛtaḥ."²

1. Righteous Rāma, p.126.
2. Ar. K. I - 17, 18.

In this regard, the Rāja Dharma or the State Ethics is opposed to totalitarianism which degrades man to the status of a cog in the wheel. The system of the administration pleaded for in the Rāmāyana draws its strength, sustenance and dynamics from its ethical or spiritual core which prevents the ruler and the ruled from deviating from the path of Truth. Justice, Love, Tolerance, Sacrifice, 'Live and let live' become the motto.

It should be borne in mind that the Rāmāyana is not a historical account. It does not give us an account of how kings, as a matter of fact, ruled in ancient India. Rather, it prescribes ways in accordance with which the king should rule. In a word, the language of the Rāmāyana, in this respect is that of 'Ought' and not of 'Is'. But we wish to point out that the Rāmāyana is not a book of 'do's' and 'don'ts'. The values follow from its metaphysics. In other words, different values enunciated in the Rāmāyana are not unconnected. They are part of a metaphysical structure. Therefore Rāja Dharma cannot be seen in isolation. It follows from the Rāmāyana's concept of man, nature and the world.

CHAPTER - III

STREE DHARMA

It is often observed that the Aryan culture was, predominantly, patriarchal and in social sphere it led to the prolonged subjugation of women folk. The sociologists, on this count, explain the backwardness and the age long exploitation of women by their counterparts. Some even, seek to draw support from the scriptures to testify that women were accorded a place of secondary importance in the social hierarchy. It is observed that women were denied the right of reading and interpreting the scriptures. Even some schools of thought are said to have gone to the extent of denying the right of liberation to the fair sex. But, all said and done, the Vedic and the Upanisadic literatures, (the source of Indian cultural ethos) bear unmistakable testimony to towering personalities like - Maitreyī, Gārgī and Lopāmudrā who remain legendary for their scholastic eminence and spiritual elevation.

The Rāmāyana, being a continuation of the Upanisadic tradition, stands to corroborate the above contention. A woman is deemed as indispensable as the man for a healthy, compact society. Rather the varied roles of a woman as the mother, wife, sister, nurse, friend, and preceptor have been extolled in superlative terms by Vālmīki.

The cherished ideals of the womanhood have been brought into bold relief through the character portrayals of Sītā, Kauśalyā, Tārā, Mandodari. Vālmīki restores dignity and sanctity to womanhood by conceiving woman not as a biological instrument for the perpetuation of species but as a veritable partner of the husband in securing merits, in psychic and as well as spiritual realms. It is rightly observed that — father, mother, son, brother and other kith and kin reap the fruits of their respective karmas, whereas it is the wife alone who shares the merits and demerits of the action of her husband.

"Āryaputra pitā mātā bhrātā putrastathā snuṣā
Svāni punyāni bhunjanāḥ svam svam bhāgyamupāsate
Bhatṛbhāgyam tu bhāryekā prāpnoti puruṣṛsabha
....."1

Rāma seeks to prevail on Sītā and asks her to stay back in Ayodhyā, so that she could discharge her obligatory duties for the decrepit, disconsolate king and the broken hearted Kauśalyā. Rāma's insistence that she must shun the thought of going to the forest on the pretext that the woods with their characteristic disadvantages, i.e., lurking fear from the ferocious animals, the deadliest snakes, gust of violent winds, the turbulent waterfalls should await her; only lives

1. A.K. 27 - 4, 5.

her shocked and aggrieved. Sītā retorts that the so called fears and trials related by him are but boons in disguise. She offers herself to move ahead removing thorns, briers, making way for Rāma and assures him of her continence, promising that she would not be an inconvenience to Rāma's carrying out the sacred resolve to live the life of an ascetic exile. Her deep and consuming love for Rāma can be read off from her observation that the shade of her husband's feet is more enviable than the opulence and luxuries in heaven and earth.

"Yadi tvam prasthito durgam vanamadaiva Rāghava
Agrataste gamisyāmi mṛḡgantī kusakantakān
Prāsādāgreṣā vimānaivā vaihāyasagatena vā
Sarvāvasthāgatā bhatroḥ pādachāyā viśiṣyate."¹

In answer to the farewell advice of Kauśalyā, Sītā affirms her determination not to flinch from the path of Dharma. She considers herself as integral to the destiny of her consort. As the strings are to the harp, the wheels are to the chariot, so is the husband (Pati) to the wife (Patnī). Unlike father, mother, sons, it is only the husband who is the source of infinite happiness for the wife.

1. A.K. 27 - 7, 9.

"
 Nātantrī vādyate vīnā nācakro vartate rathaḥ
 Nāpatiḥ sukhamedheta yā syādapi śatātmajā
 Mitam̐ dadāti hi pitā mitam̐ mātā mitam̐ sutam̐
 Amitasya hi dātāram̐ bhartāram̐ kā na pūjayet
 "1

Vālmīki glorifies conjugal relation. Unlike other human relationships which rest, basically, on give and take, the conjugal affinity is unconditional. The husband, virtuous or fallen, deserves to be adored by the righteous wife for, husband is verily the divinity incarnate.

"Bhartā tu khalu nārīṇām̐ gunavān|hiringunopi vā
 Dharma vimrusamānānām̐ pratyakṣayam̐ devi daiva tam."2

When Kauśalyā in the height of emotional frenzy at the thought of Rāma's exile in the forest bemoans her fortune and insists on accompanying Rāma to the forest the latter consoles her with the wise thoughts that he should court the life of an exile to fulfill the pledge of the father Daśaratha, the sovereign, the protector of Dharma and that she should not, on her part entertain any thought other than serving her husband in the moments of gravest despair. The

1. A.K. 39-29, 30.
 2. A.K. 62-8.

fasts, austerities, rites and rituals are of no consequence to one who does not give herself to the service of her husband. On the other hand, one who otherwise defaults in the worship of God and respect for the elders is, sure to secure 'the highest good' by serving her husband, who is verily the God personified. This is what is enjoined by the Vedas and Smritis.

"Vratopavāsaniratā yā nārī paramottamā
 Bhartāram nānuvarteta sā tu pāpagatirbhavet .
 Bhatṛṅṅśuśruṣayā nārī labhate svargamuttamam
 Api yā nirnamaskārā nivṛttā devapūjanāt
 Śuśrūṣāmeva kurvīta bhatṛṅṅ priyahite ratā
 Esa dharmah purā dr̥sto loke vede śṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ"¹

Sumantra the courtier, counsels the malicious Kaikeyī not to override the adorable husband for, the wishes of the husband ought to be more prized and preferred to that of thousand of sons.

"Māvamansthā Dasaratham bhartāram varadam patim
 Bhatṛichā hi nārīṅṅam putrakotyā viśiṣyate."²

Sītā in pleading for accompanying Rāma in the exile argues that unlike the father, mother and kinsmen the husband is the only resort of the wife in this world and hereafter.

1. A.K. 24-25, 26, 27.

2. A.K. 35-8.

"Na pitā nātmajo nātmā na mātā na sakhījanah
Ihapretya ca nārīṇam patireko gatiḥ sadā"¹

She considers it to be her cherished fortune to share the fate of her husband in the forest.

Sītā is portrayed as the paragon of wifely fidelity, devotion and sacrifice. Having bade farewell to Bharata and on entering Dandakā, Rāma commits himself to ensure the safety and peace of the hermits against the depredation of the Rākṣasas. Sītā, in her heart of hearts, entertains genuine misgivings as to the appropriateness of Rāma's pledge to protect the seers by taking recourse to the unprovoked violence. She considers it unbecoming of one who is ordained to live as an ascetic. Having been deeply concerned about the moral and spiritual well being of Rāma, she, with the painful awareness of her limitation and audacity of counselling Rāma, who was the embodiment of Dharma; reminds him of the possible moral dereliction accruing from the unprovoked vengeance.

".
Snehācca bahumānācca smāraye tvām na śikṣaye
Na kathamcana sā kāryā gṛhītadhanuṣā tvayā

1. A.K. 27-5.

Budhivairam̄ vinā hantum̄ rākṣasān dandakāśritān
 Aparādham̄ vinā hantum̄ lokān vīra na kāmāye
 Kva ca śāstraṁ kva ca vanam̄ kva ca kṣātram̄ tapaḥ
 kva ca
 Vyāvidhamidamasmābhiḥ^ḍesadharmastu pūjyatām̄
 Tadārya kaluṣā budhirjāyate śāstrasevanāt
 Punargatvā tvayodhyāyām̄ kṣatradharmaṁ carīṣyasi

Though one finds in Sītā the manifestation of all womanly virtues and perfections, Vālmīki invests her with the human frailties so that she does not appear far removed from the common run of life but remains, humanly, ideal. Sītā, in the characteristic womanly ways, insists on Rāma and grows obstinate to get the golden deer; live or dead; in spite of the dissuasions by the latter. It, consequently, paves the way for the tragic turn of events. Rāma leaves in quest of the quarry asking Lakṣmaṇa not to leave the place till his return. The sinister machinations of Rāvaṇa operates. Mārīca in the form of the golden deer simulates Rāma in crying - "Hā Lakṣmana, Hā Sītā." This is sufficient to put Sītā in her hysteric frenzy at the thought of the possible risk on her husband's life beyond which she knew nothing and aspired nothing. She asks Lakṣmaṇa to hurry for Rāma's rescue but finding him resistant (as he could smell the

1. Ar. K. 9-24, 25, 27, 28.

evil play by the Rākṣasas who by that time became the dreaded enemy of Rāma); Sītā showers the bitterest and vilest accusations on Lakṣmaṇa saying that he was but a hypocrite in disguise following his brother with the ulterior motive of having her after the latter's demise. She swears not to touch anybody other than Rāma even with her feet and holds out the horror of committing suicide.

"
 Lobhā^{ttu f}maṇā~~ḥ~~ kṛte nūnaṁ nānugachasi Rāghavaṁ
 Vyasaṇaṁ te priyaṁ manye sneho bhrātari nāsti te
 " ¹

That she could wound the sublime innocence of Lakṣmaṇa in such extravagantly worded aspersions only goes to show her single minded devotion and concern for the good of Rāma.

Sītā's taunting vilification of Rāvaṇa at the latter's promiscuous advances only anticipate her determination, steadfastness, the unswerving devotion for Rāma which is subsequently put to acid test in the Ashoka forest where she is encircled by the dreadful Rakṣasis.

1. Ar. K - 46-7, 8

"Rājyabhrasṭena dīnena tāpasena gatāyuṣā
 Kiṁ kariṣyasi Rāmeṇa mānuseṇālpatejasā
 Bhajasva Site māmeva bhartāhaṁ sadṛśastava
 Yauvanaṁ hyadhṛvaṁ bhīrū ramaśveha mayā saha"¹

Sītā's trials in the Ashoka forest bear an eloquent testimony to her infinite capacity to endure and brave the deadliest stake on her life for the cause of her love and devotion to Rāma. She is threatened to be butchered and served in the breakfast (Prātarāsārthaṁ) if she does not succumb to the passionate appeal of Rāvaṇa. She is not so much broken down at the thought of her inevitable plight in the hands of the demons, as in visualising the fate of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. The harrowing thoughts that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa might have forgotten her and have taken to the life of recluse renders her unnerved. She invokes death to overtake her but again consoles herself with the thoughts that 'Rāma is ignorant about her whereabouts' and would leave no stone **unt**urned in finding her one day.

"Athavā nyastaśastrau tvau vane mūlaphalāsinau
"

"."

Na ca me vihito mṛtyurasmindukhe^{ti} vartati
 Dhanya^{ah}khalu mahātmāno munay^{ah}stiyaktakilviṣāḥ"²

-
1. Ar. K. 55 - 21, 22.
 2. S.K. - 27 - 46, 48, 49.

Rāvaṇa brags of his fortune and power, promises Sītā all that is precious and enviable, if she concedes to be his queen and describes Rāma as deprived and forlorn, a poor ascetic bereft of might and fortune. Sītā is world above to yield to such ignoble temptations and retorts with fortitude; "Rāma; poor or deprived; is her husband and the only husband."

"Dīno vā rājyahīno vā yo me bhartā sa me guruḥ
Tam nityamanuraktāsmi yathā sūrya suvarcalā"¹

When Hanumān having read the affliction and anxiety in Vaidehī offers to carry her on his back Sītā exhibits the unchartered dimension of her chastity in saying that her unswerving devotion for Rāma constrains her from touching the body of anyone else, even though; in spite of herself; weak and helpless, she became victim of being physically abducted by Rāvaṇa.

"Bhatṛbhaktim puraskṛtya Rāmādanyasya vānara
Na spruśāmi śarīraṁ tu puṁso vānarapungava
Yadahaṁ gātrasamsparśāṁ Rāvanasya valādgatā
Anīśā kiṁ kariṣyāmi vināthā vivaśā satī"²

Her unalloyed devotion and chastity is ocularly certified in the fire ordeal. Finding Rāma recalcitrant to take

1. S. K. - 24-9.

2. S.K. - 37-62, 63.

her back for fear of obloquy, Sītā asks Saumitrī to prepare the fire for, that could only redeem her of the infamy. Sītā invokes 'fire' - the mute witness to her mind and heart, her innocence and non-transgression of righteousness in thought, word or action - for her protection and of the righteous Rāma.

"Karmaṇā manasā vācā yathā nāticarāmyaham
Rāghavam sarvadharmajnam tathā mām pātu pāvakaḥ"¹

The God of fire appears with Sītā unscathed; rather, with added brilliance, only to proclaim her untarnished purity. Again, Sītā is called upon to testify her purity before the people. She calls upon and supplicates the Mother Earth to make room for her. Her exit into the Earth's interior is the Providential corroboration of her consummate devotion and chastity. Conversely, it is a positive caricature on the public morality.

The capacity to forgive and forget is also deemed to be a necessary virtue of woman. Sītā is portrayed as the embodiment of forgiveness. After the eventual triumph of Rāma with the complete ruination of Rāvaṇa and Lankā, when

1. Y. K. - 119-27.

Hanumān solicits Sitā's wish to kill the Rākṣasis who were instrumental in perpetrating torture and affliction on her. Sītā evinces largeheartedness, the nobility of heart and mind in dissuading Hanumān from doing any harm to them; for they were only doing their part at the behest of their Master whereas she suffered her lot, as she was so destined.

"Bhāgyavaisamyayogena puraduscaritena ca
Mayaitatprāpyate sarvaṃ svakṛtaṃ hyupabhuḥjyate"¹

Kauśalyā is depicted as an ideal mother and an ideal wife though her consuming love for Rāma; who was her only hope and prop amidst all neglect and humiliations; appears to be preponderant over her wifely loyalty and devotion towards Daśaratha. The fasts and austerities, the meticulous observance of rites and fervent prayers to Gods on the eve of the coronation of Rāma marking, the consummation of her hopes and aspirations come to a naught when Rāma breaks the news of the cruel turn of events and his determination to carry out father's pledge. The heart rending grief and despair; expressed in sorrowful lamentations conjuring up her dismal days in the royal family; having been the object of neglect and malice and the gloomy future ahead,

1. Y. K.- 116-40.

the aspersions on husband's integrity and manliness are not so much descriptive of her mind as they do bespeak of her excruciating torment within; at the very thought of Rāma's separation from her. Despite the non-compromising insistence to follow Rāma, as a cow follows the calf, she is found to be, eventually, won over by Rāma when the latter appeals to the ideals of the wife arguing that the foremost duty and the supreme fruition of all the penance and austerities consist in serving one's husband in weal and woe. When Sumantra on his return, after leaving Rāma in the forest relates about their stay, Daśaratha breaks down in despair and bitterest self accusation. Kauśalyā, instead of taking pity on the raving old King, does not exhibit the least scruple in directing her scornful castigations to him. When Daśaratha; who is already crushed under the dead weight of agony and torture, supplicates her mercy and pity, appealing to her noble sense, she is jolted, as it were, into her native self.

One finds Kauśalyā, guiltfully, acknowledging her moral dereliction and sinful transgression, saying that it was all but due to her emotional upsurge at the cruel and the uncalled for fate of her dear son. Kauśalyā's lament

at Daśaratha's death and her bitterest vilifications of Kaikeyī bear an eloquent testimony to the magnitude of her warmth and devotion for her husband who died for the cause of Dharma.

Vālmīki, in the portrayal of Kaikeyī pictures her as a paradigm of womanly frailties and vices, bringing into bold relief the ideals of Stree Dharma. Finding Kaikeyī bent upon in getting her wishes fulfilled; pictures her as a veritable demoness in human form.

"Na tvamasvapateḥ kanyā dharmarājasya dhīmataḥ
Rākṣasi tatra jātāsi kulapradhvamsinī pituḥ"¹

The graphic contrast only goes to highlight the principles of Stree Dharma, the violation of which is bound to spell disharmony and discord in the individual as well as the social sphere. Mantharā represents a class of women who find pleasure and look for the occasions to be instrumental in causing suffering to others. They are the evil forces that take advantage of the frailties latent in others. Kaikeyī, who initially breaks into jubilation at the news of Rāma's coronation and rewards her with gifts, later falls a victim to Mantharā as the latter successfully rakes up the evil dormant in her.

1. A.K. 74-9.

Tārā is also depicted as a well meaning, affectionate wife who, having been imbued with the great concern for the safety of her husband and the overall peace in the family advises Vāli to restrain anger and forbids him not to challenge Sugrīva who; she smells; must have been in alliance with the mighty Rāma. Finding her advices unheeded, only pities him for the imminent ruin and prays for his good. She represents the worldly wisdom and appears as a caring, loving and the sweet spoken wife.

"
 Srūyatām kriyatām caiva tava vakṣyāmi yadhitam
 Yauvarājyena Sugrīvam tūrnam sādhvabhisecaya
 Vighraham mā kṛthā vīra bhrātrā rājanvalīyasā
 Aham hi te kṣamam manye tena Rāmeṇa sauhṛdam
 "1

Hanumāna seeks to console Tārā in her pitiable plight at the fall of Vāli in urging her to look to the future of Angada when Tārā breaks into the most vociferous assertions of her wifely pride saying that a husband is the most prized possession of a wife and preferable to son and kingdom.

"Putreṇa mama kiṁ kāryam kiṁ rājyena kimātmanā
 Kapisimhe mahābhāge tasminbhartari naśyati"2

1. K.K. 16-22, 23, 24.
 2. K.K. 19-18.

The fact that she does not accuse Sugrīva and Rāma for the death of Vāli and her confession that Vāli courted his own fall for his pride and wrath shows the extent to which she is rational and worldly wise.

Mandodari can also be taken as an ideal wife because the concern for Rāvana appears to be uppermost in her mind. Her insistence and well meaning advice to restore Sītā to Rāma, the non-compliance of which may entail complete ruin of the Rākṣasa race was turned down with passion and arrogance; but came to be true in the fall of Rāvana. Mandodari, yelling and bemoaning the loss of her husband brings to view the wealth of emotions and wifely concern towards her husband. Thus, the ideal of womanhood has been extolled and dignified. Woman is portrayed as sweet spoken, well meaning, in her different roles as mother, wife, sister, friend and nurse. In referring to Kauśalyā Dasaratha observes:

"Yadā yadā hi Kauśalyā dāsīvacca sakhīva ca
 Bhāryāvadbhaginivacca mātrvaccopatiṣṭati
 Satataṃ priyakāmā me priyaputrā priyambadā
"¹

1. A.K. 12, 69, 70.

Some historians as well as sociologists maintain that the Rāmāyaṇa accords an inferior and subordinate position to women. They seem to substantiate the thesis by appealing to certain passages, and considering them in isolation i.e. beyond context. Women, they argue, have been treated as dependent and therefore, subservient to men, for their subsistence, protection and welfare. In the childhood she is dependent on the father, in the youth, on the husband and in the old age, on the grown up son and hence, does not possess the autonomy and independence of her own.

"Pitā rakṣati kaumāre bhartā rakṣati yauvane
Bārdhakyē putra rakṣati na hi strīṇaṃ svātantrayaṃ
arhati."¹

As a virgin, she is to adore the father as the lord and the sole arbiter of her future life. Father's word in choice of her partner in life is to be deemed sacrosanct and binding.

"Pitā hi prabhurasmākaṃ daivataṃ paramaṃ hi naḥ
Yasya no dāsyati pitā sa no bhartā bhaviṣyati."²

As a wife she is to treat her husband as the preceptor (Guru), the latter deserving unconditional obedience and

1. A. K.

2. B.K. 32-21.

respect of the former. When Anasuyā discourses on the wifely duties, Sītā assures her about her prior knowledge with regard to these values.

"Naitadāścaryamāryāyā janmāṃ tvamanubhāṣase
Viditaṃ tu mayāpyetadyathā nāryāḥ patirguruḥ."¹

This points to the fact of indoctrination of the patriarchal values.

As a rejoinder to the above it deserves pointing out that the above observations, rather, tend to advocate a contrary thesis. They do not degrade but dignify the status of women. The fact that a woman secures the patronage of the father, husband and the son, in different phases of her life suggests that she remains the focal point of social concern and responsibility. She is not a liability nor an object of sympathy and pity. She is the object of love and veneration. Her roles as a mother, sister, wife, friend and counsellor are unique. Her well being is integral to the well being of man and the human destiny as such. Hence, she deserves protection and nourishment. Sītā confesses that the woman's life without the husband is not worthliving and she feels, absolutely secured and protected, in the company of Rāma.

"Na ca māṁ tvatsamīpasthāmapi saknoti Rāghava
 Surāṇāmīsvaraḥ Sakraḥ pradharṣayitumojasā."
 "Patihīnā tu yā nārī na sā sakṣati jivituṁ
 "1

The woman is not seen as object of gratification or indulgence but as a sacred partner in life's journey. To fancy at other's wife is considered, highly, reprehensible. This is brought out in Bharata's apprehension of the supposed conduct of Rāma which he thinks might have led to the exile of Rāma. It is enjoined that other's wives need protection as one's own. In the words of Jatāyu,

"Na tat samācaredvīro yatparosya vigarhayet
 Yathātmanastathānyeṣām dārā rakṣā vipascitā."2

It is often observed by the critics that the practice of polygamy points to the fact of the masculine despotism. But to think so betrays, one's inability to appreciate the sociological factors that might, at times, justify the practice of polygamy. Moreover, a polygamous social set up is not necessarily degenerate. One can notice promiscuity or moral degradation even in a monogamous set up i.e. irrespective of whether the society is polygamous or monogamous.

1. A.K. 29-6, 7.
 2. Ar. K. 50 - 7.

So, polygamy being the accepted social practice, it would be unfair to accuse Dasaratha of moral torpitude in having more than one queen. This is well made out in portrayal of the contrasting character in Rāvana who is given to lust for his indiscriminate indulgence with the seven thousand women in his harem and of Sūgrīva for his extra-marital indulgence with Tārā.

Some zealous pioneers of 'Women Liberation Movement' call into question the very propriety of Sītā's taking food after Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, which according to them is suggestive of male chauvinism. Such criticisms are not only misplaced but unfortunate. The housewife sharing the remnant of the food, so characteristic of Indian families, does not speak of her imposed deprivation but points to the subtle dimension of the familial bond. She is not only the creator, the protector but the nobility and sacrifice incarnate.

CHAPTER - IV

BHRĀTR DHARMA

There can be no denying the fact that, in opting for a corporate living, one enters into relationship with others. An individual's relation with others is determined by the station he occupies in family, group, society or the state. The stability of a corporate order is determined by the extent to which the patterns of relationship have been engrained in the individual and the social psyche. This calls for the socialisation of values. It is the norms or the values that define the patterns. It is against them that a particular action or conduct is pronounced to be warranted or unwarranted, good or evil. They are the paradigms that the individual is under obligation to conform to. The ideals may be stated in form of do's and don'ts. But they are best imparted when concretised in the actual living of the individuals. Such individuals embodying the perfections or the ideals, go down as the objects of emulation. They become, indeed, the reference points in matters relating to action and conduct. The earth has been inhabited by such exalted souls from time to time. Therefore the historical account of the nobilities prove to be socially expedient in acquainting the individuals with the often forgotten ideals. This apart, the literary geniuses also play a paramount role in

depicting the paradigms through the characters in plays, poetries and the other literary creations. Such classics go a long way in moulding or giving desirable shape to the individual and the social consciousness.

The Rāmāyana is verily, a source book of values or ideals. It is still a live controversy as to whether the Rāmāyana is a record of history or a literary epic. But, if either be the case, it does not belittle the above contention that the Rāmāyana delineates the enviable ideals defining the different offices of the individual as a ruler, husband, wife, brother, friend and the subject. Rāma, whether a historical personage or a figment of Vālmīki's imagination; remains an ideal specimen of the humanity synthesising the ideals of King, husband, brother, friend etc. in him. Though Rāma is depicted as the perfection incarnate, Vālmīki appears to be too meticulous and thorough going to introduce us to characters, exclusively, representing the ideals of brotherhood, friendship etc. The Rāmāyana offers, therefore, a complete picture of the society in its ideal setting.

Invariably; all readers and the critics take Rāma as the focal point of virtue and righteousness and other characters are considered secondary. But in respect of the

ideals of brotherhood Bharata symbolizes the height of love, renunciation and virtue. Vālmīki appears to be at his best in the portrayal of Bharata.

We are introduced to Bharata when the envoys, having been summoned by the royal counsellors on the passing away of King Daśaratha, reach Rājagṛha to bring former for his consecration, as the heir king. Prior to that Bharata has had the premonitive dreams which made him cheerless, gloomy and perturbed at the apprehension of evil that might overtake the kindred souls at Ayodhyā. On meeting the messengers, Bharata appears to be eagerly solicitous of the well-being of the King and the royal household. But as directed, the envoys do not let him know the cause of his being urgently summoned. The inauspicious omen come true. The telepathic acquaintance of Bharata with the plight of the king and the kingdom, signifies Bharata's deep sense of identification with the rest. As relevant literatures in extrasensory perception suggest, telepathy takes place only among the like-minded agents. Communication, not only takes place in the level of consciousness but is more effective and inerrant when there is congruity or identity in the subconscious and unconscious layers of the mind. Thus, the auguries of the dream bear testimony to the all encompassing heart and mind

of Bharata which makes him so sensitive to the disaster that befell the Ikṣvāku Kingdom in his absence. His earnest queries to the envoys and on arrival at Ayodhyā, to mother Kaikeyī about the king, **are** corroborative of his tender and unalloyed mind. The references showing Bharata's apprehension that his mother, because of her characteristic greed and impetuous underpinings might cause some happenings, unbecoming of the royal household, also comes true and unmistakably points to his subtle sense of perception. He stands in striking contrast to those whose sense of judgements of others is clouded by emotions. Bharata, though appears to be attached, in his endearing concern for one and all, exhibits the proverbial neutrality in having **a just assessment** of the frailties of his mother.

Seeing Bharata back from Rājagṛha Kaikeyī is filled with glee and formally **asks** about his stay and the welfare of her kiths: She hurries to break the news of Dasaratha's demise to the probing queries of Bharata, who smells evil in finding the members of the household in low spirits and the unusual absence of Daśaratha in her chamber. Kaikeyī, finding in her son the imminent fulfilment of her long nourished desire to see Bharata enthroned, grows philosophical. She, curtly, replies "Your father has courted the inevitable that all the beings are destined to."

"Yā gatiḥ sarbhūtānāṃ tām gatiṃ te pitā gataḥ
 "1

Blinded by infatuation, she fails to foresee the reaction of Bharat, who, unable to withstand the shock, collapses into virtual numbness and bemoans the memory of his father. It is here that, Bharata remembers Rāma who for him is the brother, father, master and the friend in one. He wishes to be announced to Rāma, who is now his sole refuge, because for one, who treads the path of righteousness, the elder brother is truly the father.

"yo me bhrātā pitā bandhuryasya dāsosmi dhīmataḥ
 tasya mām śighramākhyāhi Rāmasyākliṣṭakarmanaḥ."
 "Pitā hi bhavati jyeṣṭho dharmamāryasya jānataḥ
 tasya pādaḥ grahiṣyāmi sa hīdānīm gatirmama."2

Much of the social discord centres around property rights. The families get **divided** because of the fraternal dissensions relating to the ancestral property. In the common run of life, where one is given to the hectic tussle for acquisition and self appropriation of the mundane possession people are more conscious of rights than obligation. A brother is seen as the possible competitor or rival. Against this, the Rāmāyana introduces us to an ideal pattern

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1. A.K. 72-15.
 2. A.K. 72-32, 33.

of living, whereof, the elder brother is deemed as the virtual father. Fatherhood symbolises sacrifice and implies a necessary function of nourishing and guarding the interest of the youngsters. The youngsters are in their turn, expected to live in unconditional obedience and resignation to the wishes and dictates of the father. Whether it be a family or a group or a society, there has got to be a nucleus personality who commands the assent of the rest. In the patriarchal set up, the father is the focal point and in the absence of the father the eldest one is to be accorded the status of the headman. This is precisely what is born out in the law of primogeniture which deems the eldest as the rightful heir of the throne. It is on this, that the entire theme of the text revolves. In invoking Rāma as the father, Bharata discloses not only his rich fund of fraternal affection, which so, spontaneously, overwhelms him in the height of utter despondency and helplessness but shows that he is steadfastly, rooted in the principles of Dharma.

Having learnt that Daśaratha died wailing "O Rāma,
O Sītā, O Lakṣmaṇa"

"Rāmeti rājā vilapan hā Sīte Lakṣmaṇeti ca
....."¹

1. A.K. 72-36.

and about Rāma's banishment; Bharata falls back into the gravest apprehension about the possible misdemeanour of Rāma. Rāma must have been implicated with taking away of Brāhmaṇa's wealth or ill treatment of the innocent or having a fanciful eye on another's wife for, nothing less than such gross misconduct could procure him such a punishment.

"Kaccina brāhmaṇa dhanam hṛtam Rāmeṇa kasyacit
Kaccinādhyo dāridro vā tenāpāpo vihinsitaḥ."

"Kaccina paradārāṇ vā rājaputromabhimanyate
Kasmāt sa dandakāranye bhrūṇaheva vivāsitaḥ."¹

The Brāhmaṇas were highly esteemed; wedded as they were to the life of contemplation, sacrifice and non-possession. So a forceful seizure of their wealth instead of protecting them was considered to be an inexcusable evil. Similarly, dispensing justice irrespective of the rich and the poor is the enjoined duty of the prince. As it defines the very worthwhileness of the ruler any action to the contrary is deemed to be equally damnable on his part. Again, to have a passionate eye on other women, though a feature, so common in the history of the rule of the privileged, is pronounced as highly reprehensible. In this respect, the Rāmāyana seems to be vocal against the degenerate form of

monarchical rules, where the king considers himself to be the infallible sovereign having a rightful share in all that he desires; and is lost in indiscriminate indulgence. The king here, is considered as the most ideal citizen in keeping to the tenets of Dharma and thus testifying to his greatness. Bharata's apprehension reveals not only his gravest concern for Rāma's plight but brings into bold relief, the wickedness of Kaikeyī; leading to the exile of Rāma, who was world above these evils.

The brazen confession of Kaikeyī that she had been instrumental for Rāma's exile so as to pave the way for her son's coronation puts Bharata at his wits' end who hurls the vilest possible accusations. This is suggestive of the conflict between a value and disvalue, Kaikeyī, representing the lot of ordinary self-seeking mortals and Bharata representing the pristine ideals of fraternal love and sacrifice. "Of what avail is the kingdom without father and the father like brother?"

"Kiṃ nu kārya hatasyeha mama rājyena śocataḥ
Vihīnasyātha pitrā ca bhrātrā piṭṛsamena ca."¹

1. A. K. 73-2.

What is the very consummation of all ambitions for Kaikeyī, is a worthless bauble for her righteous son. What is paramount for the latter is his unqualified love and devotion for Rāma who is the 'Dharma', personified and who, rightfully, deserves the throne. He, at the out set, confesses his sheer incompetence to rule the kingdom in absence of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. This is expressive of his sheer humility.

"Ahaṁ hi purusabyāghrāvapaśyan RāmaLakṣmanau
Kena sakti prabhāveṇa rājyaṁ rakṣitumutsahe."¹

Bharata, immediately, adds that even if he could rule the kingdom by wielding of yogic power, he would not do so to see that her nefarious **designs do not fructify.**

"Athavā me bhavetsaktiyogebudhirvalena vā
Sakāmāṁ na karisyāmi tvāmahaṁ putragandhīm."²

He reminds Kaikeyī that her crooked design has not only caused death of Dasaratha and brought infamy to the race but has caused untold suffering to Kauśalyā who must be subject to the pangs of separation from her only dearest son, Rāma. The magnanimity of Bharata in his utmost concern for Kauśalyā is heightened when the latter, betrays her

1. A.K. 73-14.

2. A.K. 73-17.

subterranean resentment in insisting that Kaikeyī should expel her to the forest or Bharata should leave her in the forest so as to make the smooth way for others. Bharata fails to reconcile with mother Kauśalyā's distrust of his sincere and unswerving devotion for Rāma and swears the worst damnations to one who could consent or cause Rāma's expulsion. The emotional outbursts of his at the unjust suspicion of Kauśalyā reflects the frailty of motherhood which blinds Kauśalyā to Bharata's consuming love for Rāma, bringing into focus the unchartered dimension of brotherly love in Bharata.

Again, subsequently, Bharata becomes the object of suspicion of the Nisād King, Guhaka, who having come to learn about the large retinue headed by Bharata, is haunted by the fear of the imminent threat to the security of his men and to Rāma's life.

"Bandhyiṣyati vā dāśānathavāsmān badhiṣyati
Atha Dāsarathim Rāmam pitrā rājyādvivāsitam"¹

He proceeds with adequate army behind, to meet the eventuality, if there be any. Bharata on meeting Guha, solicits his help to be escorted to the hermitage of Bharadvāja

1. A.K. 84-4.

across the river Ganges when the latter implores Bharata to dispel his misgivings about his advances. Bharata, though, appreciative of his candid profession, is at pains to assure Guhaka that Rāma, the eldest brother is verily, his father and he proceeds with the single minded devotion to bring him back to Ayodhyā and that there should be no room for such suspicion.

"Mā bhūt sa kālo yat kaṣṭam na mām śankitumarhasi
Rāghavaḥ sa hi me bhrātā jyeṣṭhaḥ pitṛsamo mataḥ."

"Tam nivartayitum yāmi kākustham vanavāsinam
Budhiranyā na te kāryā Guham satyam brabīmi te."¹

The fear of the Nisāda King is born out of the genuine concern for Rāma's safety. Bharata's clarificatory protestations reveal his appreciation of such protective concern as well as his agony for being an object of suspicion for causing harm to Rāma; his sole refuge.

Bharata along with Vaśiṣṭha repairs to Bharadvāja. Having treated them with lavish hospitality, Bharadvāja appears to show his explicit resentment in asking him as to why he still pursues Rāma, the noble and the immaculate, who is given to a life of the ascetic renunciation paving the way for him to rule without any hindrance.

1. A.K. 85-9, 10.

"Kimihāgamane kāryam tava rājyam praśāsataḥ
Etadācakṣasva me sarvaṁ na hi me śudhyate manaḥ."¹

Bharata appears to be visibly, hurt at such hurting suspicion on the part of a seer, of Bharadvāja's stature and explains his innocence in saying that he had nothing to do with his mother's machinations.

"Hatoṣmi yadi māmevaṁ bhagavānapi manyate
Matto na dosamāsamke naivaṁ māmanuśādhi hi."

"Na ca itadistam mātā me yadvocanmadantare
Nāhametena tuṣṭasca na tadvacanamādade."²

The apprehension of Bharadvāja appears to be incompatible with his omniscience exhibited in his foreknowledge; about the arrival of Rāma and the course of things that were destined to follow and even in the pacificatory words to Bharata, while he (Bharata) introduces his mother with, exorbitantly, offensive remarks. But Bharadvāja - for that matter any seer of high attainments - in spite of his extraordinary endowments, while conducting himself in the common parlance has got to operate with due respect for the manners and values of the commoners (Lokācara). Bharadvāja, in suspecting Bharata's intention was only voicing the natural doubts of the inmates as to Bharata's arrival, more so,

1. A.K. 90-10.

2. A.K. 90-15, 16.

when he was decreed to enjoy the throne at the cost of Rāma. His suspicion and Bharata's innocent confession shows the depth of the brotherly devotion which is put to the acid test of humiliation, from time to time.

For Bharata, Rāma is the only object of devotion. For him Rāma is not only his uterine brother but the 'Righteousness personified. This is testified in the celebrated scene when Satrugna catches hold of Mantharā - the crooked accomplice behind the heinous plot leading to the death of their father and the banishment of their beloved brother-along with Kaikeyī Bharata dissuades him from killing his mother not because she is his mother, as she deserves that for her damnable deed but because it would hurt the noble conscience of his brother Rāma, who would despise him for committing the act of matricide and asks him to spare Mantharā for, the righteous brother would not felicitate them for killing a woman who deserves forgiveness according to the laws of Dharma.

"Taṁ prekṣa Bhrataḥ kṛdhaṁ Satrubhnaṁidambravīt
Abadhyāḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ pramadāḥ kṣaṁatāmiti."

"Hanyāmahamīmāṁ pāpāṁ Kaikeyīnduṣṭacāriṇīm
Yadi māṁ dhārmiko Rāmo nāsūyenmātrghātakam."

"Imāmmapi hatām kubjām yadi jānāti Rāghavaḥ
Tvām ca mām ca hi dharmātmā nabhibhāṣiṣyate dhṛvam."¹

Thus Bharata's confession that he would not even hesitate to kill her mother - though forbidden by Dharma - but for the reprobation of Rāma; does not suggest that Bharata was not steadfastly, established in Dharma nor that his affection for Rāma outweighs all considerations, whatsoever. It rather suggests that Bharata, by being noncompromisingly attached to the ways of Rāma, who was, verily the embodiment of dharma, was, also, tenaciously wedded to Dharma.

Interestingly enough, among all the characters it is only Rāma who appears to be unfailingly cognisant of Bharata's devotion and dedication. When the subjects of Ayodhyā grow insistent to follow Rāma into the forest he assures them that Bharata, the noble and the virtuous would invest himself in securing them good and prosperity. Hence they should transfer their respect and devotion to Bharata.

"Yā prītirbahumānasca mayodhyānivāsinām
Matprijartham visesaṅ Bharate sā bidhiyatām."

"Sa hi kalyāṇacāritrah Kaikeyānandabardhanah
Kariṣyati yathābadhah priyāni ca hitāni ca."²

1. A.K. 78-21, 22, 23.
2. A.K. 45-6, 7.

Subsequently, one finds Rāma reprimanding Lakṣmaṇa, as the latter having surveyed the large army following Bharata imputes murderous motive to Bharata. Rāma's reproach is tinged with subtle sarcasm. He observes that Lakṣmaṇa's fear is unfounded as there had in the past, been, no gesture on the part of Bharata necessitating such apprehension and adds that if such suspicion is actuated by jealousy he would ask Bharata to step down so as to pave the way for Lakṣmaṇa. But he assures that Bharata, who is dearer to him than his own life, always respectful of the law, conscientious, must be coming solicitous of seeing them, overpowered with love and agony.

"Snehenākrāntaḥṛdayaḥ śokenākulitendriyaḥ
Dṛ^aṣṭumabhyāgato hyesa Bharato nānyathāgataḥ."

"Bipriyam kṛtapūrvam te Bharatena kadā nu kim
Idṛṣam vā bhayam te adya Bharataṁ yadvisankase."

"Yadi rājyasya hetostvamimām vācam prabhāṣase
Bakṣyāmi Bharataṁ dṛstvā rājyamasmai pradiyatām."¹

This is soon after certified in the momentous meeting of the two brothers, Bharata growing obstinate in urging Rāma to return to Ayodhyā and rule; Rāma refusing to flinch from his commitment to 'Dharma' and the 'Truth' which

1. A.K. 97-11, 14, 17.

consists in carrying out the pledge of their noble father. Bharata argues that Rāma ought to condescend to accept the throne, for, it rightfully, belongs to the eldest born;

it is the cherished wish of the subjects and widowed mothers who have so expectantly, come all the way to see him enthroned; it is quite unbecoming of a prince to lead the life of such deprivation and because he, being too incompetent, cannot rule to the expectation of the people. How could an ass imitate the speed of the horse and a bird that of Garuda?

"Gatiṁ khara ivāsvasya tārksyasyeva patatrināḥ
Anugantum na saktirme gatiṁ tava mahipate."¹

The above brings into relief Bharata's passionate yearning to see Rāma enthroned and his utter sense of humility. In trying to appeal and exploit Rāma's unconditional reverence for the deceased father Bharata observes that it is only by accepting the throne that the folly committed by their father under the spell of infatuation owing to his decrepitude can be made good and he offers himself to proxy him in courting the exile for himself for fourteen years. But Rāma would not even prefer the sovereignty of the whole

1. A.K. 105-6.

world to the will of his father and admonishes Bharata in saying that such words are not befitting of him who is of so noble descent and prevails upon him ^{in arguing} that in due reverence to the father's wish, Bharata is to rule and **he has** to live the life of an exile. Finding Rāma unbending, Bharata decides to fast unto death. The celestial bodies and saints, in view of the inevitability of the death of Rāvaṇa persuade Bharata to concede to the wishes of Rāma. Eventually, Bharata takes the sandals of Rāma and returns to Ayodhyā and enthrones the sandals as a sacred symbol of his brother's presence and rules the kingdom with renewed determination, staying in the outskirts of the city at Nandigrām, having shunned the royal splendours, living the life of a renunciate, putting on bark and matted hair, taking roots and fruits; in absolute empathy with the life of an exile that his beloved Rāma was destined to court.

The dialogue reflects the conflict of two orders of rationality. Rāma represents unquestioning and unqualified obedience to Dharma whereas Bharata's attitude typifies more pragmatic and expedient approach to Dharma. The latter seeks to justify Rāma's return by an appeal to his emotions (in insisting that he should respect the wishes of the aggrieved mothers and the agonised subjects) and to the

common norms "Lokācāra Dharma" (in insisting that it is only by accepting the throne that he could make good the infamy caused by Daśaratha and that in observance of the pledge he should court the exile in lieu of Rāma). Bharata's views seem to be more rational; pragmatic and socially expedient. But Rāma's resolve in not succumbing to Bharata, having duly acknowledged his love and devotion; points to a novel dimension of 'Dharma'. Rāma's steadfast refusal does not show his rashness but a still higher degree of sublimity which consisted in transcending the worldly considerations of right and wrong in favour of the more cardinal principles of Dharma against which the former are rendered significant. The resoluteness of Rāma vindicates that the highest ideal consists in living in noncompromising conformity to Dharma. Dharma cannot be practised by proxy. Hypothetically, a little lenience on part of Rāma might have brought temporary happiness and prosperity but in that case Daśagriva (Rāvaṇa), the evil incarnate would not have been killed and that would have prolonged the suffering and agony of the seers, the peace-loving and the righteous. The above episode does not speak of a **schism or the rejection** of the brotherly love of Bharata but the sublimation, the consummation of the paternal bond. Bharata's ecstatic jubilation in seeing him enthroned on return from exile

having confessed that he, by Rama's grace, could succeed in enhancing the prosperity and happiness of the kingdom bespeaks of his proverbial humility and marks the consummation of the fraternal tie.

On the other hand, the character of Lakṣmaṇa unravels a different dimension of brotherhood. Unlike Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa appears to be more rash, quick tempered and more pragmatic. He is celebrated for his dogged and unconditional devotion for Rāma. He would lay aside all considerations in safeguarding the interest of Rāma. He would not even feel any scruple to raise arms against Daśaratha for his supposed folly under infatuation and anyone siding Bharata's coronation at the cost of the righteous Rāma. He would not hesitate to vow vengeance against Bharata for his supposed sinister advance to Citrakuta. He tends to be blind to sense and reason in the event of the actual and possible stake to Rāma's interest. Thus one comes across Lakṣmaṇa determinedly, following Rāma in spite of the latter's advice for him to stay back so that he could look after the broken hearted Kauśalyā and the mother Sumitrā and on later occasion when he is asked to go back to Ayodhyā; on the pretext that they might be suffering indifference and negligence by Bharata and Kaikeyī.

"Mātsarāṅkaraṇāddevi Sumitrā dukhamāvaset
Ayodhyamita eva tvam kalye praviśa Lakṣmaṇa."

"Kṣudrakarmā hi Kaikeyī dveṣādnyāyamācaret
Paridadyā hi dharmajño Bharate mama mātaram."¹

His love for Rāma outweighs and engulfs his love and obligation for others. Thus one finds Lakṣmaṇa in the role of guardian, procuring the provision for the comfort of Rāma and Sītā; accompanying them with solemn resolve to guard and protect with all price, however dear it be. The height of sacrifice and purity fills Guhaka with respect and admiration when the latter offers him a soft bed to lie down and the latter refuses to rest when Rāma and Sītā, used to the life of regal comforts sleep in utter discomfort and deprivation. From these one ought not conclude that Lakṣmaṇa's tie with Rāma was merely sentimental. In safeguarding Rāma against all odds and hindrances, Lakṣmaṇa was only protecting Dharma, for, to him Rāma was but the Dharma incarnate. It is precisely for this that Lakṣmaṇa questions the propriety of so called Dharma, the obedience to which leads to Rāma's exile and the uncalled for suffering and deprivation. He would not even mince words to satire Rāma's obedience to the so called Dharma as mere fanaticism. By his reckoning it is not righteousness that makes the righteous suffer for it. Subsequently, in the battle field when Rāma falls into swoon at the sight of the beheaded Sītā summoned by the sorcery

1. A.K. 53-16, 18.

of Indrajit, Lakṣmaṇa in utter despondency calls into question the way of Dharma which obtained the undeserved hardships and the ignoble end of the righteous! Here Lakṣmaṇa is seen as representing the rational, the pragmatic, and the well meaning lot whose considerations of right and wrong rest on immediate dividends.

Lakṣmaṇa's concern for his brother's interest makes him react with violence at Sugriva's utter apathy and supposed breach of loyalty who forgets his onerous obligations to Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa wounds and rouses him from his voluptuous indulgence with words breathing venom and vengeance. Such movements of wrath born of agony, only, discloses the depth and magnitude of his love and devotion.

Lakṣmaṇa follows Rāma as a shadow, treating him as the father and Sītā as the mother, ever obedient and committed. It is only once that he fails in his enjoined duty. Sītā falls a prey to the sorcery of Mārīca when the latter simulates Rāma in making the distress cry "Hā Sītā, Hā Lakṣmaṇa. Presuming her husband's life to be at stake, she asks Lakṣmaṇa to run to his rescue. But finding Lakṣmaṇa adamantly committed to his brother's words - as he was in

know of the crooked ways of the Rākṣasas - she wounds him with scathing accusations ascribing ulterior motives and ultimately, with threats of suicide which overwhelm the pious innocence of Lakṣmaṇa and the latter leaves her to the 'inevitable.' 'Lakṣmaṇa,' failing in his bounden duty; does not speak of the imperfections of the brotherly devotion nor that his commitment was too tenuous, to withstand the sentimental onslaughts of Sītā. It, rather discloses the frailty, as such, of man, when pitted against the 'Inevitable.'

The multifaceted expressions of Lakṣmaṇa's character is discernible in the swift transition of his roles quite in keeping with the changing exigencies. One finds the rash and the ireful Lakṣmaṇa as a counsellor in giving strength and solace to Rāma when he breaks down in the traumatic shock and agony at the dreadful thought that Sītā might have been devoured and killed by the Rākṣasas. In the moments of harrowing grief, too overwhelming to put Rāma into veritable numbness, Lakṣmaṇa rises to the occasion in vowing with his characteristic adamant gesticulations of prowess, to destroy the whole universe together with gods and on the other hand, in admonishing Rāma to shake off despondency, so unbecoming of his valour and sagacity and counsels him

to summon, instead, all his might so that he could meet any eventuality on the way of finding Sītā:

"Utsāhamātramāśritya pratilapsyāma Jānakīm
Tyajatām kāmavṛttatvam śokopahataacetanaḥ."¹

Similarly, when Rāma is about to break down at the pining thoughts for Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa cautions him not to be under the sway of the emotional excesses so that he could rise to the exigencies, which, in fact, awakens the latter to a state of equipoise.

"Nyasya śokaṃ ca mohaṃ ca tato dhairyamupāgamat
Sobhyatikrāmadavyagrastāmacintyaparākramaḥ."²

Thus, one finds Lakṣmaṇa at times, haughty and revengeful needing to be pacified and reprimanded by Rāma and at times, composed, protective; counselling and even, admonishing Rāma. But remarkably, what runs in and through the apparent fluctuations in his state of mind; is his love and concern for Rāma. His concern and identification with Rāma is, in other words, his concern for and identification with righteousness. The uniqueness of the love is, duly, certified by Rāma, when the latter finding Lakṣmaṇa unconscious by

1. Ar. K. 1-125.
2. Ar. K. 1- 126.

the dreadful weapon of Rāvaṇa, laments that the company of Lakṣmaṇa is even more enviable than the glory of sovereignty and the happiness in the company of Sītā!

"Paraṁ viṣādamāpanno vilalāpākulendriyaḥ
 Na hi yudhen me kāryam naiva prāṇasamā Sītayā."
 "Tam tu deśam na pśyāmi yatra bhrātā sahodaraḥ
 Kinnu Rājyena durdharsalakṣmanena vinā mama!"¹

Thus, the reciprocity is total and absolute. Rāma appears to be the focal point or the nucleus around which the love and devotion of Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Satrugna revolve. What renders their love so unqualified and sublime is not the fact that they were bound by the umbilical chord but obviously, the fact of it being broadbased on Dharma. The self-courted suffering and sacrifice is not for Rāma the brother but Rāma the righteous. It is against this that Bharata's vile accusations of mother Kaikeyī; Lakṣmaṇa's wrath against Daśaratha, suspicion of Bharata, his provocations and bellicosity are rendered significant and enobling. Who is a brother? Who can be kindered and who is an alien? There is a sense in which all - being the children of the Providence - are bound to each other in the eternal bond of fraternity. But, when seen in the perspective of the social

1. Y. K. 102-10, 13.

dynamics a uterine brother is not necessarily a kindred and the 'supposed other' is not necessarily alien! This is born out by the contrary examples! Sugrīva, in spite of his loyalty and devotion is expelled by the arrogant and the iry Vāli. Vibhīṣaṇa's well meaning brotherly advice incurs him the humiliating expulsion: These bespeak of the 'Evil' repelling the righteous! Though thrown out by their own brothers, Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa find refuge in Rāma. 'Good' can co-exist with the 'good,' not with the 'evil.' So, only the righteous can be the kindred. It is also truistic that two evils cannot co-exist. They destroy each other. When evil is pitted against good it invites it's eventual ruination. Hence the rapport with the good, and the righteous is noble and enduring and is, verily, the "Brotherly Love."

CHAPTER - V

MITRA DHARMA

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," goes the maxim. The value of friendship has been dwelt upon by poets, playwrights, law makers, philosophers and religionists, both Eastern and Western, from time to time. The rights and obligations of an individual in the family, group or society are determined by the intra-group and intra-social relationships. The individual is called upon to conduct himself in ways appropriate to his station (in the family, group or society) or his relationship with other members or units of the collective body. For example, as a son one is to look after the interest of the parents, as a father, to see to the welfare of his children, as a husband the interest and comforts of his wife, as a member of a community, to share and discharge the bounden obligations to the community at large, as a worker, employee or a trader to abide by certain ethics and as a citizen, to act loyally in the interest of the state or nation. These relationships can be said to be formal in so far as they are defined by laws or values (written or unwritten) and they enjoy the explicit or implicit approval of the normative codes of the collective body.

But quite significantly, the necessities of life and circumstances render it compelling for one to enter into

relationship with individuals; from other than the group to which he is bound by the above relationships! Similarly, different communities enter into inter-communal relationship. The different units of the social body, be it an individual, the family, the group, the community, or the state, in course of their growth, expansion and development are bound to interact with each other. This leads to the cross-assimilation of the interacting units and synthesis of values. Thus, the very existence, growth and development of the society necessitate the individual to enter into rapport with other individuals, one community, with another and one nation, with the other.

'Friendship', in the broad sense of the term, is connotative of the cordiality or rapport between individuals, groups and the nations. 'Friendship,' in the collective sphere, is marked by mutuality of interest, bilateral consensus and agreement. But 'friendship' on the individual plain is more informal. It rests on love, fellowship and sacrifice. It transcends the considerations of caste, colour, sex and race. A friend is he, who shares the fortunes and adversities of a friend.

"Utsave vyasane caiva durbhikṣe satṛ vighrahe
Rājadvāre śmaśāneca ya tistati saḥ bāndhavaḥ."¹

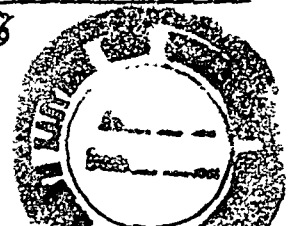
1. Cānakya Slokah

Contrarily, infidelity, ingratitude and breach of loyalty to the friend are deemed as positive disvalues;

"Mitradrohī kṛtaghnasca yasca viśvāsaghātakaḥ
Trayaste narakaṁ yānti yāvat bhūtasamplavaṁ."¹

The Rāmāyaṇa acquaints one with the ideals of true friendship. It introduces us to a novel dimension of friendship brought into focus through the characters of Rāma, Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa. Vālmīki seeks to bring home the ideals of friendship, in and through the dialectics of the episodes and the conflict of emotions, expressed through the pronouncements of different characters.

The fate conspiring, the sinister machinations of Rāvaṇa come true. Rāma, along with Lakṣmaṇa, as the sole kindred, moves about in frantic quest of Sītā, often, breaking down into piteous musings at the thought of his beloved but consoled and counselled by Lakṣmaṇa with words of optimism. The hope of finding Sītā finds anchorage in their meeting with Kabandha, who having got redeemed from the curse with the divine touch of Rāma, discloses about Sugrīva, the Vānara chief, who could be instrumental in finding Sītā. He assures Rāma of Sugrīva's help in words laudatory of his competence (to find out Sītā), friendlike steadfastness and



devotion. Subsequently, one finds Sugrīva filled with misgivings at the sight of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa thinking that they might be the spies summoned by Vāli. Hanumāna admonishes him in observing that such fears having been unfounded, are but expressions of his timidity, and unbecoming of a ruler. Acknowledging the merit of Hanumāna's remarks, Sugrīva would explain the reason of his innocent doubts in adding that kings keep very many friends to achieve their ulterior designs, to which the credulous fall a prey.

"Vālipraṇihitāvetau śankehaṃ purusottamau
Rājāno vahumitrāsca viśvāso nātra hi kṣamaḥ.
Arayasca manusyeṇa vijneyāschaḥ śacāriṇaḥ
Viśvastānāmavisvastā randhreṣu praharanti hi."¹

With his doubts dispelled, when Hanumāna conveys the good will of Rāma, Sugrīva proceeds and offers himself in friendship.

Sugrīva's suspicion of the brothers at first sight, is attributed to his native weakness and timidity by Hanumāna. An analysis of the circumstances would convince one that the Hanumāna's admonition was quite timely and appropriate. It was befitting of Hanumāna to boost the morale of Sugrīva, given to despair and misgivings, at a time when he

1. K.K. 2-21, 22.

should find ways and means of retaliating against Vāli. Hence, the observations of Hanumāna need not be taken, literally, as descriptive of the monkeysh nature of Sugrīva. Here, one finds three different characters representing three different sets of values. That Sugrīva is prone to suspect, is born out not only in his misgivings at the sight of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa but on the occasion, when Vibhīṣaṇa seeks refuge in Rāma. Sugrīva takes him to be the spy summoned by the Rākṣasa king with ulterior motives. "Inscrutable are the ways of the Rākṣasas, who assume different forms at their will. So Vibhisana along with the accompanying Rākṣasas deserve to be killed," observes Sugrīva.

"Antardhānagatā hyete Rākṣasāḥ kāmārūpiṇaḥ
 Sūrāsca nikṛtijnāsca tesu jātu na visvaset
 Pranidhī Rākṣasendrasya Rāvanasya bhavedayaṁ
 Anupravisya soasmāsu bhedaṁ kuryāna saṁsayāḥ
 Badhyatāmeṣa danḍena tīvreṇa sacivaiḥ saha
 Rāvanasya nṛsaṁsasya bhrātā hyeṣa Vibhīṣaṇaḥ."¹

Thus, on both the occasions, Sugrīva appears to be sceptical, apprehending evil. But he adduces reasons for such disbeliefs. The reaction of Hanumāna stands as a striking contrast to this. The situations that make Sugrīva fall into dismal anticipations leave Hanumāna unperturbed and optimistic. He tends

1. Y.K. 17-21, 22, 29.

to take things at their face value but this is not to say that he is, unduly, credulous. This is certified when Hanumāna, in order to divine the real motive of the brothers goes in the guise of a mendicant. But it is evident that Hanumāna takes Rāma's friendly protestations for granted. Similarly, he takes the candid entreaties of Vibhīṣaṇa to be genuine. For him, the exterior is an unfailing index to the interior. Evil cannot masquerade for good. Good or evil can hardly be camouflaged; for they have their natural and inevitable expressions in and through the like demeanours.

"Ākāraschādyamānopi na śakyo vinigūhitum
Valādhi vivṛṇotyeva bhāvamantargataṃ ṛṇṇām."¹

Neither Sugrīva can be said to be timid nor Hanumān presumptuous. Both seem to have been guided by their own logic, their measure of judgement having been, determined by two different sets of values. They react differently to the same situation. Sugrīva, having been a victim of distrust and cruelty is prone to mistrust. He represents those, who, having been disillusioned, tend to see things with their characteristic cynicism. Hanumāna reflects a more positive and pragmatic trait. He would acknowledge goodness at its face value unless or otherwise there are grounds for suspicion. Unlike the two, Rāma discloses altogether a different

1. Y.K. 17-63.

paradigm. He seems to be above faith and suspicion. He accepts Kabandha's words about Sugrīva as true. The latter's profession of friendly concern at Rāma's plight is duly acknowledged in Rāma's reciprocity and assurance to restore him to his legitimate status. He reiterates his confidence in Sugrīva in explaining his delay, at first instance.

"Svayameva hi viśramya jnātvā kālamupāgam¹
Upakāraṃ ca Sugrīvo vetsyate nātra saṃsayah."¹

When Vibhīṣaṇa prays refuge having been humiliated by Rāvaṇa he seeks the opinion of Sugrīva, Hanumāna and Lakṣmaṇa. Finding them divided in their suggestions Rāma, unequivocally, indicates that he is committed to extend protection to one who asks for it irrespective of friend or enemy, even to Rāvaṇa, his most dreaded enemy.

"Abhayaṃ sarvabhūtebhyo dadāmyetadvrataṃ mama
....."
"Vibhiṣaṇo vā Sugrīva yadi vā Rāvaṇaḥ svayaṃ
....."²

This tends to undermine Sugrīva's suggestion that the enemy's men are not to be trusted, more so, when they are the Rākṣasas. Vibhīṣaṇa, be he good or evil, the fact of his being

1. K.K. 28-62.
2. Y.K. 18-33, 34.

solicitous of shelter from Rāma, makes him entitled to latter's protection. Thus, Rāma's friendship with Vibhīṣana seems to transcend the considerations of mutuality or selfish interest. This militates against the notion that friendship can be effected among individuals with common interest or mutuality.

Aristotle observes that friendship obtains between individuals and groups on the basis of mutuality of advantage or utility.

"...all forms of community are like parts of the political community; for men journey together with a view to some particular advantage, and to provide something that they need for the purposes of life; and it is for the sake of advantage that the political community too seems both to have come together originally and to endure, for this is what legislators aim at, and they call just that which is to the common advantage."¹

The Rāmāyana attests the ideal friendship to be based on the principles of righteousness irrespective of whether it is conducive or non-conducive to one's interest. The observations of Rāma in granting refuge to Sugrīva goes to show that true friendship is not necessarily bilateral. Against this it is worthwhile to re-examine the commonly

1. *Ethica Nicomachea* Aristotle, p. 1160
(The works of Aristotle, Trans: W.D. Ross)

held view that Rāma's friendship with Sugrīva was based on common interest. Rāma wanted Sugrīva to be instrumental for recovering Sītā and Sugrīva wanted him to be instrumental for regaining his wife and kingdom by killing Vāli. But such views seem to be too sweeping and miss the underlying import of the episodes. As evident in the preceding occasions, Rāma is found to extend his unconditional help and protection to the Ṛsis of the forest. Later he grants refuge to Vibhīṣaṇa with utter ease and spontaneity. It is significant that his promise to deliver Sugrīva from his miserable plight is prompted by the same considerations. Sugrīva would have obtained his help even without his being capable of finding Sītā. This is quite consistent with Rāma's characteristic traits. The reciprocity of Sugrīva was but incidental. The Rāma-Sugrīva accord (at least from the point of view of the former) was prompted by considerations of the righteous principle that one seeking help at the time of danger or need, has to be attended to, at all costs.

The ideal tie between Rāma and Sugrīva (the Vānara king), Rāma and Vibhīṣaṇa (representing the Rākṣasa race) certifies that true friendship frustrates the barriers of clime and race. This, also, lends scriptural sanction to the cultural synthesis of the Aryan and the Non-Aryan. Adjudged

against this, the view that the Rāmāyaṇa advocates the Aryan supremacy and contains blasphemy against the Non-Aryans is groundless and unfair.

One may still argue that if Rāma's own interest were not uppermost in him then he would not have been provoked into unusual fury at the inordinate delay of Sugrīva in implementing his resolve.

"Na sa sankucitaḥ panthā yena Vālī hato gataḥ
Samaye tistha Sugrīva mā Vālīpathamanvagāḥ"

"Eka eva raṇe Vālī śareṇa nihato mayā
Tvāṃ tu satyādatikrāntaṃ haniṣyāmi sabāndhavāṇ."¹

In replying to this one may argue that Rāma's wrath was evidently, actuated by the supposed breach of faith and loyalty which he deems to be too heinous for forgiveness.

"Subhaṃ vā yadi vā pāpaṃ yo hi vākyamudīritaṃ
Satyena pariḡrnhāti sa vīraḥ purusottamaḥ."

"Kṛtārthā hyakṛtārthānāṃ mitrāṇāṃ na bhavanti ye
Tān mṛtānapi kravyādāḥ kṛtaghnānopabhunjate."²

The conduct of Sugrīva comes as a total contradiction of his earlier protestations of friendly ideals. 'A friend, rich or

1. K.K. 30-81, 82.

2. K.K. 30-72, 73.

poor, happy or unhappy, faulty or faultless is the highest refuge and one ought to sacrifice wealth; happiness and even one's life on account of the love for the friend;'

"Ādhyo vāpī darīdro vā dukhitaḥ sukhitopi vā
Nirdoṣo vā sadoṣo vā vayasyaḥ paramā gathiḥ
Dhanatyāgaḥ sukhatyāgo dehatyāgopi vā punaḥ
Vayasyārthe pravartante snehaṁ dr̥stvā tathāvidham."¹

His inability to **be true to his resolve, in total disregard** of the friendly ideals, of which he is so explicitly aware, makes him the object of the wrath of Rāma and fury of Lakṣmana.

But, it is worth noting that Rāma's reproof does not make Sugrīva less ideal as a friend. He falls back into obliviousness not because of his lack of concern or warmth for Rāma nor because of his positive disregard for Rāma after the fruition of his desires but because of his proneness to sensuous indulgence, on account of the limitations, native to his monkey^{sh} existence. When Hanumāna reminds him of his gross violation of the friendly norms in not discharging his onerous obligations for the noble and righteous Rāma;

1. K.K. 8-8, 9.

"
 Mitrārthamabhinītartha yathāvat kartumarhati
 Sa^{ya} jya sarvakarmāṇi mitrārthe yonū^avartate."
 "Sambhramād^hā kṛtotsā^h sonarthenāvarūdhya^{te}
 Yastu kālavayatīteṣu mitra kāryamarindama."
 "Sa kṛtvā mahatopyarthāna mitrārthena yujyate."¹

he is roused from the slumberous indulgence and gives stringent commands to the subordinates to move heaven and earth to find Vaidehī, the nonfulfillment of which would mean their death.

"Urdhvaṃ māsāna vastavyaṃ vasanbadhyo bhavenmama
 Sidhārthāḥ sam^mivartadhvamadhigamya ca Maithilīm."²

When informed of Lakṣmaṇa's rage and fury, Sugrīva appears to be penitent of his guilt in not fulfilling his obligations to Rāma for his sheer fickleness of mind. It is easy to make friendship but difficult to sustain it.

"Sarvathā sukaraṃ mitraṃ duṣkaraṃ paripālanam
 Anityatvā^{tu} citta^{tu}nām prītiralpepi bhidyate."³

He is also apologetic before Lakṣmaṇa for his immoral transgression of faith and love, against Rāma, who has been the sole cause of his fortune and happiness.

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1. K.K. 29-12, 13, 14.
 2. K.K. 40-68.
 3. K.K. 32-7.

"Yadi kimcidatīkrāntam̄ viśvāsātpraṇayena vā
Preṣyasya kṣamitavyam̄ me na kasccināparādhyati."¹

He renews the vow to put his mite in carrying out the wishes of Rāma, though he (Rāma) is able to achieve his objective unaided.

"Sītām̄ prāpsyati dharmātmā badhiṣyati ca Rāvaṇam̄
Sahāyamātreṇa mayā Rāghavaḥ svena tejasā.
Sahāyakṛtyam̄ kim̄ tasya yena sapta mahādr̥māḥ
Sailāsca vasudhā caiva bāneikena dāritāḥ."²

He prostrates himself at Rāma's feet beseeching his forgiveness. All these together bring into surface the innocence, humility and nobility in Sugrīva, overshadowing his limitations as a vānara for his failure to rise up to the expectations of men.

Sugrīva's empathetic concern for Rāma is discernible from the way he counsells Rāma when the latter gives way to overpowering lamentations at the sight of the ornaments of Sītā. He seeks to win over the grief with the well meaning admonitions that such despair is not becoming of him who is so resolute, humble and noble hearted, more so; when he being (Sugrīva) so inferior as a vānara withstands the pangs of separation from his wife.

1. K.K. 36-11.

2. K.K. 36-7, 8.

"Mayāpi vyasanam prāptam bhāryāharaṇajam mahat
 Na cāhameva socāmi na ca dhairyam parityajet
 Nāham tāmanusocāmi prakṛto vānaropi san
 Mahātmā ca vinitasca kim punardhṛtimānbhavān."¹

Painfully aware of his limitations and lest it may be counted as sheer audacity on his part to counsel Rāma, he affirms that such words are prompted by his concern for Rāma's welfare, not out of the desire to instruct him.

"Hitam vayasyabhāvena bṛmi nopadisāmi te
 Vayasyatām pūjayanme na tvaṁ socitumarhasi."²

This squarely, points to his concern and humility.

The two episodes bordering on the Rāma - Sugrīva and Rāma - Vibhīṣaṇa alliance points to the distinct polarisation of good and the evil. Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa represent goodness and virtue, pitted against the evil represented by Vāli and Rāvaṇa. Rāma is seen to act in collusion with the righteous forces to eradicate the evils.

Some critics tend to question the propriety of Rāma's conduct in killing Vāli who was evidently not committed to any offence against Rāma. This is also voiced by Vāli when Tārā disuades him from entering into an encounter with

1. K.K. 7-6, 7.
 2. K.K. 7-14.

Sugrīva and in his accusations of Rāma having been, fatally, wounded by the latter. Vāli assures Tārā that Rāma, by virtue of being righteous, would not take recourse to such a sin.

"Na ca kāryo viṣādaste Rāghavam̄ prati matkṛte
Dharmajnasca kṛtajnasca katham̄ pāpam̄ kariṣyati."¹

In the parting scene he accuses Rāma of hypocrisy whose kind and virtuous exterior conceals the cruelty and viciousness within, which only could goad him to kill one (who was in no way harmful or inimical) from a hiding, a demeanour unbecoming of a Kṣatriya.

".
Jāne pāpasamācāram̄ tṛnaiḥ kūpamivāvṛtam̄"
"Satām̄ veṣadharam̄ pāpam̄ prachannamiva pāvakam
Nāham̄ tvāmabhijanāmi dharmachadmābhisamvṛtam̄."
"Viṣaye vā pure vā te yadā pāpam̄ karomyaham̄
Lingamapyasti te rājan dṛsyate dharmasamhitam̄."
".
Kaḥ Kṣatriyakule jātaḥ śṛtavānhasṭasamsayah̄."²

The justification of Rāma's conduct is found in his answers to Vāli. Vāli forfeits his right to accuse him by appealing to Dharma for, he himself has already flouted

1. K.K. 16-5.

2. K.K. 17-23, 24, 25, 27.

Dharma by his alleged vice in expelling Sugrīva, to whom he as the elder brother is verily the father, and by his heinous indulgence with his wife, who deserves the treatment, due to one's sister. For such egregious folly as this, nothing less than the killing of him is deemed to be righteous.

"Na hi dharmavirudhasya lokavṛttādapeyuṣaḥ
Dandānyatra paśyāmi nigrahaṁ hariyuthapa."

"Oaurasim bhaginīm vāpi bhāryā vāpyanujasya yaḥ
....."

"Na hi te maṛṣaye pāpam kṣatriyohaṁ kulodbhavaḥ
....."1

The king verily is the divinity personified. Vāli, given to arrogance and wrath has been blind to the considerations of right and wrong, virtue and evil.

".
Devā manuṣyarūpeṇa carantyete mahītale"

"Tvam tu dharmavijnāya kevalam rosamāsthitaḥ.
....."2

This precisely led to the unjust expulsion of the well meaning and loyal Sugrīva and his (Vali's) licentious indulgence with Rūma. Restoration of the good by destruction of the evil is the Dharma. Any means to that end is also righteous. So the killing of Vāli was not only appropriate but

1. K.K. 18-21, 22, 23.

2. K.K. 18-44, 45.

also obligatory for Rāma as a Kṣatriya! And in killing Vāli, Rāma, also fulfills his sacred resolve to Sugrīva, which is again in keeping with Dharma.

Who is a friend and who is an enemy? Good and evil are mutually incompatible. They repel each other. The persuasive brotherly advice in urging Rāvaṇa to give back Maithilī and to restrain from encounter with Rāma, incurs Vibhīṣaṇa, the wrath and humiliation from Rāvaṇa. He is accused of envy, and treason. Realising the imminent doom of Rāvaṇa along with the Rākṣasa race, Vibhīṣaṇa seeks refuge in the righteous Rāma. The absolute surrender of Vibhīṣaṇa which marks the beginning of the momentous rapport between the two is suggestive of the fact that the good has natural affinity with the good and that it is enduring.

"
Bhavadgataṃ me rājyam ca jīvitam ca sukhāni ca."¹

This is brought into relief in the dialogue between Indrajit and Vibhīṣaṇa, the former accusing the latter of ingratitude for forsaking the kith and kin and seeking refuge and collaborating with the enemy. "Company with own men, (who are)

1. Y.K. 19-5.

bereft of merits is preferable to the friendship with the alien even if they are virtuous," observes Indrajit.

"Guṇavān vā parajānaḥ svajano nirguṇopi vā
Nirguṇaḥ svajānaḥ śreyān yaḥ paraḥ paraeva saḥ."¹

Vibhīṣaṇa's retort proves the inappropriateness of the above accusations in showing the distorted view of morality pleaded for by Indrajit. Vibhīṣaṇa disowns his Rākṣasa lineage in asserting that though born in the Rākṣasa race, he imbibes the higher virtues, by virtue of which he parts company from his brother, who being arrogant and wrathful is given to unrighteousness and evils; like hostility with the innocent, immoral possession of others' wealth, seduction of others' wife and ruination of his own men.

"
Guṇavyaḥ prathamo nṛṇāṃ tanme śīlamarākṣasaṃ"

"Na rame dāruṇenāhaṃ na cādharmaṇa vai rame
."

"
Abhimānsca kopasca vairityaṃ pratikūlatā"

"Ete doṣā mama bhrāturjīviteisvāryānāśanāḥ
."

"Doṣeireteḥ parityakto mayā bhrātā pitā tava
."²

1. Y.K. 87-15

2. Y.K. 87-22, 23, 27, 28.

The dialogue is indicative of the conflict between two orders of morality. Indrajit voices the common morality that is temporarily expedient but ultimately indefensible and unrewarding. The death of Indrajit and Rāvaṇa and the ruination of the Rākṣasa race bear testimony to the fact that truth or morality based on Righteousness or Dharma ultimately prevails. (Satyameva Jayate). Rāma's victory, the restoration of Sugrīva and coronation of Vibhīṣaṇa testify that the true friendship is possible only among the righteous and that the friendship based on Dharma is true, and abiding.

The Rāmāyaṇa envisages and enunciates 'friendship' in terms of Dharma. Genuine friendship does not aim at personal or selfish gains but upholds and furthers the cause of Dharma. We have already argued out through the course of different chapters that Dharma is one of the key concepts in the Rāmāyaṇa and all other concepts **hover** round it. The concept of friendship is peripheral and has to be understood in the light of Dharma alone.

SEVAKA DHARMA

In the preceding chapter it has been argued that Dharma is the corner stone of the Rāmāyana. It seeks to vindicate the supremacy of Dharma in the world. Dharma is the basic and impersonal principle. Even truth has an anchorage in Dharma. Rāma is said to be an incarnation (Avatāra) of Visnu. Visnu is God. Rāma, the Avatāra of Visnu is the embodiment of Dharma. He is the God personified,

"Āditya iva dusprekṣaḥ samare satṛbhiḥ sadā
Bhavitā hi tadā Rāmo nara Nārāyaṇaḥ prabhuḥ"¹

though he might appear to be a person; as the son of Daśaratha and the consort of Sītā. To realise God is to be established in Dharma. One step ahead in the process of spiritual upliftment is one step closer to Dharma.

The ancient Indian tradition recognises different ways of reaching Godhood. They are principally the paths of action (Karma), Knowledge (Jnāna) and devotion (Bhakti). They are not mutually incompatible but complementary. The synthesis of action and knowledge (Jnāna-Karma Samucaya) has been advocated as the most expedient means leading to the highest state. In the theistic literatures, devotion is

1. U.K. Pra 3-21.

deemed as paramount and the potent and unfailing means for the realisation of the supreme. In the Bhagavadgītā, Arjuna is urged to surrender completely at the feet of the Lord Kṛṣṇa.

"Sarva dharmān parityeḥya māmekaṁ saraṇaṁ vraja
Aham tvāṁ sarvapāpebhyaḥ mokṣayisyāmi mā sucaḥ"¹

Several scriptural references also testify to the fact that even the illiterate and the unsophisticated can realise God by their ardent devotion and total surrender. The way of surrender or prapatti has been extolled as the superior path (Pusti Mārga). The devotional sentiment expresses itself in very many ways. In the Bhakti literatures, the God, the Lord or the Supreme has been construed as the son, the friend, the master, the consort etc. and giving rise to the Vāstalya Bhāva (Filial Devotion), exemplified in Yasodā's love for the infant Kṛṣṇa, Sakhā Bhāva (Friendly Devotion), exemplified in Arjuna's devotion for Lord Kṛṣṇa, Dāsyā Bhāva (Trusted ministerial devotion) exemplified in Hanumāna's devotion for Sri Rāma and Rādhā Bhāva (Intimate conjugal devotion) exemplified in the devotion of Rādhā for Lord Kṛṣṇa respectively.

1. B. Gita Ch. 18 - 66.

In the Rāmāyana, Hanumāna, Guhaka, Sabari and Jatāyu are the exemplars of the Dāsya Bhāva or the Sevaka Dharma. The word 'sevaka' is derived from the root 'sevā' which means 'serve.' There is no English equivalent of the word 'sevā'. It can be understood as the selfless, unconditional service for the cause of righteousness or Dharma. Hence, it would not be appropriate to translate 'sevā' as 'service', 'sevaka' as 'servant' and 'sevita' as the 'master'. As a matter of fact, the master-servant relationship is alien to the spirit of the Rāmāyana. Rāma is not the master nor Hanumāna the servant. The relation, there in, transcends the considerations of selfish interest or mutuality. The service and the self-courted suffering of Hanumāna is not for any ulterior gain but is actuated by the spontaneous and unqualified love and devotion for the righteous Rāma.

Hanumāna's devotion for Rāma is born, out of his respect for righteousness. This is reflected in his advice to Sugrīva when he reminds the latter of the breach of loyalty to Rāma. Promise has to be kept. Dharma has to be upheld. To violate the promise is to militate against Dharma.

"Rājyaṃ prāptaṃ yaśascaiva kaulī . srīrabhivardhitā
Mitrāṇāṃ saṅgrahaḥ śeṣastad bhavānkartumarhasi."¹

1. K.K. 29-9.

Though Hanumāna is sanguine of his prowess, he is found to be remembering Rāma in invoking his blessings and grace before his proverbial feat of crossing the oceans.

"Sa vegavānvegasamāhitatmā haripravīraḥ paravīrahantā
Manah samādhāya mahānubhāvo jagāma Lankām manasā manasvī."

This goes to indicate that valour or the physical might coupled with the divine grace can work wonders in fulfilling 'ones' mission. He is unmindful and unconcerned of the imminent dangers, hazards and risks. Finding his life to be at stake in his encounter with Surasā, the mother of the Nāgas, he implores her to be spared for the time being so that he could make himself available for her food after the completion of his mission.

"Tasyāḥ sakāsam dūtoham gamiṣye Rāmasāsanāt
Kartumarhasi Rāmasya sāhāyam viṣayavāsini"²
"Athavā Maithilīm dr̥stvā Rāmam cāklistakāriṇam
Āgamisyāmi te vaktraṁ satyam pratiśṛnomi te."³

This shows that Hanumāna's concern for Rāma is uppermost in Hanumāna and outweighs all other considerations. The service rendered

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1. K.K. 67-51.
 2. S.K. 1-159.
 3. S.K. 1-160.

not a means to further personal ends but prompted by the desire to be a sacrifice at the altar of Dharma. His torture and humiliation in the court of Rāvana are eloquent testimonies of his endurance for the cause of Dharma. Instead of loosing spirit, he continues his hectic search for Vaidehī and remains steadfast to the mission all through. He conjures of frightful plights on the event of Sītā, not being found. If Sītā is not traceable and rescued it might lead to the utter despair and disappointment to Rāma causing his ruination, in the process leading further to the death of the widowed mothers in Ayodhyā, Sugrīva, Rumā, Tārā, Angada and eventually the entire vānara race. Despair ridden Hanumāna, decides, then to court death by entering into fire and in the height of fury born out of utter disappointment he thinks of killing Rāvana.

"Sītānimittaṃ durvākyaṃ śṛtvā sa na bhaviṣyati
 Taṃ tu kṛchragataṃ dr̥stvā pancatvamgatamānasam"
 "Bhṛsānurakto medhāvī na bhaviṣyati Lakṣmanaḥ
 Vinastau bhrātarau sṛtvā Bharatopi mariṣyati"
 "Bharataṃ ca mṛtaṃ dr̥stva Satṛghno na bhaviṣyati
 Putrān mṛtān samīkṣyātha na bhaviṣyanti mātaraḥ"
 "Ikṣvākukulanāsasca nāsacaiva vanaukasām
 Sohaṃ naiva gamiṣyāmi Kiskindhām nagarīmitaḥ"

"Citām kṛtvā pravekṣyāmi samidhamaranīsutaṁ
"
 "Rāvanaṁ vā badhiṣyāmi Dasagrīvaṁ mahāvalaṁ
"¹

The exploits of Hanumāna should not be treated as a mere help towards Rāma in his moments of distress but his sincerest commitment and identification with the latter's plight. Though he possesses the unmatched valour, there is no indication any where in the text of his arrogance born out of his physical prowess. Rather, in every juncture, he remembers Rāma, offers prayers before initiating anything momentous and consequential.

"Satyaṁ Rākṣasarājendra sṛṇusva vacanaṁ mama
 Rāmadāsasya dūtasya vānarasya viśeṣataḥ"
 "Sarvānlokānsusaṁhṛtya sabhūtān/sacarācarān
 Punareva tathā sraṣṭuṁ saktō Rāmo mahāyaśaḥ"²

Adventures are embarked upon, daring feats are accomplished by Hanumāna not to parade his courage and valour but to rescue Sītā and thereby to safeguard Dharma.

1. S.K. 13-24, 25, 26, 37, 41, 49.
 2. S.K. 51-39, 40.

It has already been pointed out that a sevaka is not a servant or a subordinate of the master. The considerations of personal interest or utility, gain or loss, do not simply enter into the relationship between the Lord and the sevaka. It is the preservation, protection or safeguarding of Dharma that guide and nurture the relationship and render it enduring. The Rāmāyana lays emphasis on the concept of 'one's station and duty' in life. It provides the convincing answer as to 'what one should do?' One's duty is determined by the station one occupies in the society. One is to discharge one's duties with non-compromising devotion and commitment irrespective of any consideration whatever. No other consideration except that of righteousness or Dharma should determine and regulate one's duties in life. It will not be out of place to emphasize in this connection that the Rāmāyana advocates the supremacy of Varnāśrama Dharma. A close look at the different characters portrayed in the epic is corroborative of this. The King (ruler), the father, the son, the wife discharge their respective duties and obligations in accordance with the tenets of Dharma. Seen in this perspective, there is no concept of master and servant, superior and inferior in the Rāmāyana. Hanumāna is no less important than Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. He may be a vānara (monkey) but **he attains immortality by discharging his duties in accordance with Dharma.**

"Vānarohaṁ mahābhāge dūto Rāmasya dhīmataḥ
 "1

Guhaka is another sevaka. On his first encounter to Rāma he not only welcomes him with lavish hospitality but offers him his kingdom with all his subjects. He requests Rāma to consider his kingdom as Ayodhyā and his subjects, as his own subjects.

"Svagataṁ te mahāvāho taveyamakhilā mahī
 Vayaṁ preṣyā bhavānbhartā sādhu rājyaṁpraśādhi nah"2

What is it indicative of? Why does Guhaka unconditionally surrender his subjects and kingdom to Rāma, relatively unknown? What could be the answer? Is it out of any consideration for any ulterior gain? The answer is an emphatic 'no.' Rāma, the avatāra of Visnu is the Dharma incarnate. So the rule of Guhaka kingdom by Rāma is the rule of righteousness. Dharma is the key stone in the Rāmāyana. This is reflected subsequently in Guhaka's utmost concern for the trio when he offers himself to guard Rāma and Sitā; asking Lakṣmana to rest on the soft bed. His suspicion of Bharata is corroborative of his protective concern for Rāma's safety and well being and his deep sense of identification.

1. S.K. 36-2.
 2. A.K. 50-38.

"Bandhayisyati vā dāśānathavāsmān vadhisyati
 Atha ~~D~~āsarathim Rāmaṁ pitrā rājyādvivāsitaṁ"
 "Bhartā caiva sakhā caiva Rāmo ~~D~~āsarathirmama
 Tasyārthakāmāḥ saṁnadhā gangānūpetra tisthata"¹

Guhaka is a Nisāda King. Nisādas are the hills men, the forest dwellers. Vālmīki in portraying the character of Guhaka has sought to encompass even the forest dwellers within the ambit of Varnāsrāma Dharma. It is left to the historians to ascertain if as a matter of fact the hills men and the forest inhabitants were also covered by Varnāsrāma Dharma. But for Vālmīki, Dharma knows no limitation of caste, community and tribe. 'Man,' according to him, is a value concept. Man's worth is determined to the extent he pursues Dharma. It might have been a fact that the untouchables and the tribals were looked down upon. But the Rāmāyana gives a scriptural sanction to the effect that everybody has the right to live and lead life in accordance with Dharma. Scripturally, no one is a brāhmin or a non-brāhmin by birth or heredity. It is the action that makes a man noble or ignoble. The discriminations are but symptomatic of degeneration and decadence of the social ethos.

1. A.K. 84-4, 6.

Sabari is another important character. She has been portrayed as a sevikā. The name suggests that she is a forest dweller; undergoing penance in the hermitage of Mātanga, the sage. What does it speak of? Why does a woman forest dweller choose the path of austerity, penance and renunciation? One may opine that these values are prerogative or monopoly of the upper class. The episode tells us that Sabari had been waiting wistfully for the arrival of Rāma. She was in know of Rāma's divinity from different sages and seers. On meeting Rāma, she feeds him with tender fruits culled from the forest and Rāma takes it with zest and flavour. Sabari feels blessed. All her life's endeavours and penance find fruition at the sight of the Lord.

"Adya me saphalaṁ janma svargascaiva bhaviṣyati
 Tvayi devavare Rāma pūjite puruṣarṣabha"
 "Cakṣusā tava saumyena pūtāsmi Raghunandana
 Gamisyāmyakṣayālokān/ **tavaprasādādarindama**"¹

She lights the pyre, consigns herself into it and attains the eternal abode. The pristine simplicity of Sabari expressed in her wholehearted love and devotion for Rāma earns her the final redemption. The act of feeding is not merely the physical act of giving food to one who is in need of it. It is

1. Ar. K. 74-12, 13.

accompanied by the consumming concern, the absolute commitment, devotion and surrender to Rāma, the Righteous. There are various ways of realising Godhood. Sabari realises it through seeing and serving Rāma.

Jatāyu, the vulture king, a sevaka of first water lays down his life in frantic efforts to protect Sitā from the iron clutches of Rāvaṇa; the Rākṣasa. What does the episode signify? He had hardly had any first hand acquaintance with Rāma. Even then he comes forward to make the dearest sacrifice for the cause of righteousness. This is reflected in his accusation of Rāvaṇa.

"Kathaṁ rājā sthito dharme paradārān/parāmṛṣet
Rakṣanīyā viśeṣeṇa rājadārā mahāvalaḥ"

"Rājā dharmasca kāmasca dravyānām cottomonidhiḥ
Dharmaḥ śubhaṁ vā pāpaṁ vā rājamulaṁ pravartate"¹

This shows that though a bird, the consideration of propriety and righteousness are uppermost in his mind. Rāma breaks down at the sight of his pitiable plight and acknowledges his supreme sacrifice. Jatāyu is put to the flames by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and repairs to the celestial abode. It will not be redundant to reiterate in this connection that Vālmīki

1. Ar. K. 40-6, 9.

seeks to enunciate the supremacy of Dharma in all spheres. Dharma embraces within its compass not only the humans but also all the living species. The service and sacrifice for Dharma are self-rewarding, it secures to one the summum bonum.

CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION

The Rāmāyana has drawn the attention of scholars from different disciplines, both in the east and the west. Researches have been conducted, commentaries have been written, international seminars have been organised on different aspects of the Rāmāyana. But the epic has hardly been subjected to philosophical reflections. Indologists, like J. L. Brockington have tried to reconstruct the social, political, religious and economic history of the then India, solely on the strength of the internal evidences. We do not propose to maintain that history cannot be reconstructed out of the Rāmāyana but that the Rāmāyana is not history. It is not a historical record. History can be reconstructed from different literary sources but to treat them as historical records will be too sweeping a claim. It is not only the internal evidences but also other pertinent evidences which are required to establish the historicity of the claims.

Prof. Brockington seems to have reconstructed history solely on the basis of the internal evidences of the Rāmāyana. He takes the incidents related in the epic as real happenings, the characters portrayed there in, as historical personages. He goes on to provide exhaustive descriptions of the king, court, army, people, religious pattern and social

and economic conditions of the society. It is needless to mention that any work of art, be it prose, poetry, drama, music, painting, is sure to reflect the cultural milieu of an age. But at the same time it does not exclude innovation or creativity on the part of the author. Seen in this light, the Rāmāyaṇa can also be said to have borne positive reflections about the the-then society. But to treat it as history in the sense of chronology will be too presumptuous unless their historicity is otherwise corroborated by an appeal to independent internal evidences.

He tends to opine that Rāma had concubines by appealing to the following.

"Hṛstāḥ khalu bhavisyanti Rāmasya paramāḥ striyaḥ
Aprahr̥stā bhavisyanti snuṣāste Bharatakṣaye."¹

"Pratikarma ca Sitāyāḥ sarvā Dasarathastriyaḥ
Ātmaneiva tadā cakṛmanasvino manoharam̐."

"Tato vānarapatnīnām sarvāsāmeva sobhanam̐
Cakāra yatnāt Kausalyā prahr̥stā putralālasā."²

The phrase 'Rāmasya Paramāḥ Striyaḥ', perhaps makes him conclude that Rāma had many wives. No doubt, 'paramāḥ striyaḥ' is in the plural. Literally it means 'many beautiful wives'.

1. A.K. 8-12.

2. Y.K. 131-17, 18.

But in Sanskrit language the plural form is used not only to indicate 'many' but also to qualify a person of respect and honour. Prof. Brockington seems to have missed this point. Further, he also misinterprets the expression 'vānara patnīnām.' This phrase means 'the wives of the vānaras' who accompanied Rāma to Ayodhyā after the victory. He takes it to mean 'Rama's wives.' Such observation not only rests upon the terminological misinterpretation but is evidently, incongruous with the delineations in rest of the epic. Brockington deserves to be credited for his meticulous cataloguing of terms with their different shades of meaning. However, he does not seem to have reflected upon the important and core aspect of the Rāmāyana, i.e., the values.

Professor Sankalia toes the same line in treating the Rāmāyana as a historical record.

"Almost everyone implicitly believes that everything that is narrated in the Ramayana is a fact, an incident which had taken place some time in the past."¹

For him, all the characters are historical, all the places are historical places and all the happenings are historical happenings.

1. Rāmāyana-Myth or Reality, p.1.

"Rāma was an illustrious descendant of the Iksvaku dynasty with its capital at Ayodhyā. For this statement though there is no contemporary (historical) record, still this fact is vouchsafed by all the Puranas and early Jain and Buddhist traditions which are not later than the 3rd century B.C. It is true however that there is no clear, unambiguous reference to Rāma in the early and late Vedic literature, though Janaka, a king of Videha, figures often in the Upanishads.

Likewise besides Ayodhya, Mithila, Kausambi, Kanyakubja are all well known places and the history of these places, though not fully laid bare archeologically, might be as old as 800 B.C. at least."¹

For him, Rāma is a historical personage and Rāvaṇa belongs to the tribe, Gond.

"...Rāvaṇa belonged to the Gond tribe, ..."²

He does not substantiate his observation by any external evidence for he acknowledges there to be hardly any. But his appeal to the fact of recurrence of the name Rāma in the Purānas, Buddhist and Jain literature, and the name Janaka in vedic literature makes him surmise that they were the real individuals. But such evidences can hardly be said to be conclusively corroborative of the historicity, for it is quite possible to think that they were but the popular names employed by the poets and philosophers to suit their narrative or philosophical ends.

1. Rāmāyana-Myth or Reality, p. 44.
2. Page - 49.

The international seminar in the Rāmāyana held in New Delhi, in 1975, did not take adequate cognisance of the central theme of the Rāmāyana. Barring one article entitled "Validity of the Rāmāyana - Values" By Mrs. Sukumari Bhattacharji, there is hardly any other reference to, or reflection on values. Even then she has simply shown as to how the values have been concretised in and through the characters of the epic. The article does not throw any light on the nature, significance and justification of values.

The only relevant work is the doctoral thesis of Benjamin Khan entitled "The concept of Dharma in the Vālmiki Rāmāyana." But he treats the values as relative, utilitarian, pragmatic and space-time bound.

"I have stated that Dharma is relative. It is different for people at the several stages of development. To a religious man, Dharma means the precepts found in the Vedas, and a strict adherence to them. To an ethical man, it is the voice of inner conscience that helps him to distinguish between what is good and what is to be avoided. To a man on the street, it means customs and traditions, To a scribe it means law, secular or political, and to a philosopher, it means a metaphysical principle that binds and holds everything that sustains and nourishes, the principle of a thing in virtue of which it is what it is."¹

We would not dispute the claim that values in actual practice have to be adapted to the objective conditions. But it may

1. Page 40.

be observed here that values in the relative plain draw their sense and significance from the basic or core values that are absolute. Relativity presupposes absoluteness even at the conceptual level. Logically speaking, the so-called relativistic concept of Dharma cannot be made intelligible without postulating an absolutistic conception of it. Moreover, the justification of activities as Dhārmic calls for an appeal to the basic and absolute principles of morality or Dharma. In other words, Dharma is to be construed as absolute both in respect of meaning and justification of the normative actions of the individual and society at large. A philosopher seeks to analyse the logic of the notion 'Dharma.' His task is out and out conceptual. He tries to draw the logical geography of different concepts in their varied uses in different spheres, even in common parlance.

Vālmīki, the poet philosopher enunciates the notion of Dharma through character portrayals, so as to offer the paradigm of ideals or perfections. He treats Dharma as absolute and space-time independent. The considerations of gain and loss are simply irrelevant in the context of Dharma. Utilitarianism has no place. Pragmatism, too is uncalled for. The conduct and demeanour of different characters are solely corroborative of this. Daśaratha finds himself helplessly fettered by the considerations of Dharma in fulfilling

his resolve to Kaikeyī, in the midst of excruciating agony and despair. Rāma is adamant in carrying out to the very letter, the wishes of Daśaratha. The instigations of Lakṣmaṇa to revolt against the supposed injustice, the grief torn subjects urging him to stay back and rule, the persuasions and entreaties of Bharata to rule the kingdom prove futile to win Rāma who is so steadfastly committed to execute the wishes of his father irrespective of any ulterior considerations whatsoever.

The throne of Ayodhyā, so cleverly managed for Bharata by his mother Kaikeyī fails to tempt him from the righteous considerations. Having failed to prevail upon Rāma, Bharata enthrones the sandal of his beloved brother Rāma and rules as the regent king by taking to an ascetic mode of living. Lakṣmaṇa follows Rāma as his shadow with the dogged concern for Rāma's well being. Sītā has no other obsession except the good of Rāma, even in the moments of frenzy and despair, when her life is at stake in the Ashoka forest. All these point to the singular fact that an unqualified and unflinching adherence to Dharma is the watchword for all the righteous forces. Expediency and utilitarian considerations are out of context. Suffering, self-sacrifice and renunciation for the cause of righteousness are **the moving force**. The relative, utilitarian or hedonistic considerations are alien to the very

spirit of the Rāmāyana. What contributes to the development of the story is that each character appears to be non-compromising in adhering to Dharma appropriate to his or her office. Dasaratha would rather die under the deadweight of agony and infamy but would not **revoke or go back on the premises** already made. Rāma would ignore any consideration except that of translating the wishes of his father. Sītā would throw all considerations in braving the torments and trials for the cause of her husband. Bharata would not swerve a little from his brotherly devotion which is but the devotion for the righteousness. Quite significantly, one notices references only to duties and obligations but not to rights. In fact, the concept of right is an integral part of duty. By discharging one's duty to another one fulfills the rights of the other. If everyone is committed to ones' duty or obligations, the rights of everyone is taken care of. But it is an unfortunate travesty of fact that the modern democracy or the political values make one, only right conscious. It goads the individual, communities and nations to vie with one another for assertion of rights which make them oblivious of their obligations. This proves mutually prejudicial and consequently suicidal. The discord or disharmony in the family, society and the state puts in jeopardy the interests and happiness of everyone. The epic has remained a classic

and shall continue to be so for advocating a system of eternal and absolute values.

It would not be out of place to institute a comparison between Vālmīki and Kant in respect of their views on values. Kant maintains that the moral injunctions are categorical and are of the nature of imperatives or commands. He does not leave any room for rational deliberation or alternative speculation with regard to one's duty. Duty has to be discharged at all costs. 'My station and my duty,' is indicative of the social hierarchy, the duty of the individual being determined by the position he occupies, there in. Vālmīki, too treats values as absolutes, unconditional and of the nature of categorical imperatives. **Nonetheless,** there is a world of difference between them. For Vālmīki, justification of any action is derived not from the considerations of the individual interest or the social expediency but from the principles of righteousness. For Kant, the collective good lends justification to an action whereas for Vālmīki the justification of an action is to be made by an appeal to the principles of righteousness or Dharma.

Benjamin Khan also treats the Rāmāyana as a normative science and urges us to treat it as a natural science.

"Though epic is treated as a normative science, its practical value can be gauged by looking at it as a natural science."¹

From the above it appears that he **is mistaken** about the nature and scope of normative science as understood in the contemporary literature. A normative science provides us with theories of morals supported by logic and arguments. It might employ the empirical instances or examples. But they are of the nature of illustrations. On the other hand, an epic seeks to instill norms or values through characters, episodes, parables and fables. The mission of an epic poet is not evidently to give a catalogue of do's and don'ts but to educate the masses through portrayals of the paradigms. A normative system may be basic to an epic but unlike the former, it is not uni-thematic but poly-thematic. The only object of the normative enterprise is to present and justify a system of values, whereas the objective of an epic is multifarious. That is to say, an epic is not unitary or monolithic in its content. It accommodates the heterogenous ideas, practices and ideologies in order to offer a totalistic picture of human living in its ideal setting. Considered from this perspective, the Rāmāyana is an omnibus, as it were. It has taken into account almost all the facets of human relationship and seeks to **nurture**

an absolutistic ethos which shall remain viable irrespective of time and space. It does not propagate fundamentalism in any form. It is eclectic in content and spirit and is the true representative specimen of Indian culture. This is precisely the reason why the Indian culture has survived various onslaughts from time to time.

Further, an epic need not be treated at par with the natural sciences. Professor Khan appears to have confused between the method of understanding an epic with the method, appropriate for understanding a work in natural sciences. An epic is a piece of art. The conditions of intelligibility in judging or appreciating an epic are vastly different from criteria employed in assessing a theory in natural science. Observation, experiment, objectivity, hypotheses and verifications, truth and falsehood are integral to the understanding of a scientific theory. But they are not at all relevant to understanding a work of art enunciating values.

Harry M. Buck seems to have made an important observation about the Rāmāyana in his article "The Role of the Sacred Book in Religion - The Rāmāyana," wherein he characterises the Rāmāyana as an embodiment of human experience.

"I do not think of the Rāmāyana simply as a collection of some 24,000 slokas nor a monumental work in Hindi and another in Tamil. Ramayana to me is, human experience."¹

Though the rationale behind such claim has not been spelt out in detail yet it can be argued out as follows: The Rāmāyana represents a very vital aspect of human experience in portraying the eternal conflict between good and evil and the eventual triumph of the latter over the former. This has been adequately brought home by the ultimate victory and glory of the righteous forces and the ignoble doom of the evil ones. Daśaratha, Rāma, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Mālyavāna, Jatāyu, Hanumāna, Sampāti, Kauśalyā, Sītā, Tārā, Mandodari, Nikasā, Trijatā, Saramā, Sabari are not individuals, but the archetypes that represent the height of virtues and ideals. The Rāmāyana tradition is a tradition of truth. The Rāmāyana culture is the culture of the noble and the righteous. The Rāmāyana is not a story of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā but the story of mankind. It depicts the eternal conflict in and outside man, between good and evil and propagates the consequential victory of former over the latter. Justice comes, but comes late. Vālmīki demonstrates that the path of truth is tortuous. Daśaratha, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Jatāyu

1. The Rāmāyana Tradition in Asia, p. 41.

court hardship, suffering and trials in the hands of the evil forces. But that the 'truth' reigns supreme in the long run is the eternal decree of Providence.

If the Rāmāyana is a history, it is a history of different sort altogether. It is not a history of the different races, communities and tribes but a history of the conflict in man and society. It is a history of conflict between values and disvalues. Good and evil are co-eternal. What does it signify? Good and evil co-exist. The real life situations also disclose that both the virtuous and vicious live together and there is invariably a dialectical conflict between good and evil. Good and evil impart meaning to each other. If evil would not have been there, one would not know what goodness would connote. Even in conceptual plain, good is meaningful with reference to evil and vice versa. The good, the virtuous, the righteous suffer; but in the long run, good preponderates over evil. What does it speak of? In fact, it testifies to the moral order of the universe. The Rāmāyana is a continuation of the Upanisadic tradition. It projects the Upanisadic values like Ṛta, Law of Karma, Providential decree etc. The world is not a chaos but a cosmos. The Providence remains embedded in the very nature of things in form of the immanent order which is otherwise termed as Ṛta. Man is but one of the many created things

and beings, though superior to all the rest. As the integral part of the cosmos he also partakes of the essence of the whole. This is certified when one finds that any disorder or reversal of values in the human world has its corresponding echo in form of anomalies in nature. Following the abduction of Sītā one finds the animals giving up their edibles and the trees shading off their leaves in empathy with the plight of Sītā. The nature bears a bleak and pathetic look.

"Rudantamiva bṛkṣeisca mlānapuspamṛgadvijam
Sirya vihīnaṁ vidhvastaṁ saṁtyaktaṁ vanadevataḥ"¹

Moreover, the evil portents reflected in the inauspicious dreams of Bharata, and the evil omens in Lankā after the abduction of Sītā, signifying the death of Rāvaṇa also go to substantiate the inter-connectedness and immanent harmony of the universe.

"Yāmeva rātriṁ te dūtāḥ pravisanti sma tām purīm
Bharatenāpi tām rātriṁ svapno dr̥stoyamapriyaḥ."
"Svapne pitaramadrākṣaṁ malinaṁ muktamūrdhvajam
Patantāmadriśikharātkaluṣe gomayachrade."²

1. Ar. K. 60-6.
2. A.K. 69-1, 8.

"Plavamānasca me dr̥staḥ sa tasmīn/gomayahrade
Pivannanjalīnā tailam̐ hasannapī munurmuhuh̐."
"Tatastīlāudanaḥ bhuktvā punaḥpunaradhaḥśīrāḥ
Tailenābhyaktasarvāngastailamevāgāhata."
"Swapnepī sāgaraḥ śuṣkam candraḥ ca patitaḥ bhuvī
Upardhāḥ ca jagatīm tamaseva samāvṛtām̐."
"Oaupavāhyasya nāgasya viṣāṇam śakalīkṛtam
Sahasā cāpi samsāntaḥ jvalitaḥ jātavedasaḥ."
"Avadīrnā ca pṛthivīm̐ śuṣkānsca vivīdhān/ḍṛmān
Aham paśyāmi vidhvastān/sadhūmāḥcāpi parvatān."¹

"Yadā prabhṛti Vaidehī samprāptehāḥ purīm tava
Tadā prabhṛti dr̥syante nimittānyasubhāni naḥ."
"Sasphulingaḥ sadhūmārciḥ sadhūmakaluṣodayaḥ
Mantrasamdhukṣitopyagnirna samyagabhivardhate."
"Agniṣṭesvagnīśālāsu tathā brahmasthaliṣu ca
Sarīsr̥pāṇi dr̥syante havyeṣu ca pipīlikāḥ."
"Gabāḥ payāḥsi skannāni vimadā vāḥrakunjarāḥ
Dīnamasvāḥ praheṣante na ca grāsābhinandinaḥ."
"Vāyasāḥ saṅghaṣaḥ krūrā vyāharanti samantataḥ
Samavētāsca dr̥syante vimānāgreṣu saṅghaṣaḥ."
"Gr̥dhrāsca parilīyante purīmupari pinditāḥ
Upapannāsca sandhye dve vyāharantyaśivam̐ śivāḥ."
"Kravyādānām̐ mrgānām̐ ca purādvāreṣu saṅghaṣaḥ
Srūyante vipulā ghoṣāḥ savisphūrjath^a ṇiḥsvanāḥ."²

1. A.K. 69-9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

2. Y.K. 10-14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

The ways of the Providence or the Divine are reflected in the act of cosmic dispensation in form of reward to the virtuous and punishment to the evil. An action that tends to promote the cause of good and harmony of the totality is in consonance with the cosmic order and thereby secures immunity from it. On the contrary, an evil action is one that violates, disturbs the order and thereby precipitates its own ruination. Evil destroys itself. The conflict between good and evil in life situation is but a dramatisation, empirical manifestation of the cosmic dialectic. This fact is harped upon by legends, mythologies, folk tales, folk lores etc., down the ages. The wisdom of mankind, largely, is embossed in the mythologies, folk tales, folk lores etc. One comes across stories and legends almost in all societies showing the supremacy of good over evil. The history of humanity also testifies to it. The evil forces attaining a temporary ascendance over the good becomes instrumental for its own ruination; whereas the suffering of the good turns out to be relative and transient. The Rāmāyana is an eloquent testimony to it.

Professor Raghavan is right in observing that the latter day literatures, itihāsa and purāṇa, grew having drawn inspiration from the Rāmāyana. In fact, its impact is well discernible from the subsequent literatures. The

Rāmāyana has quite appropriately been characterised as the Ādi Kāvya. It is not 'Ādi' in the sense of being first in space and time. It is not 'Ādi' in the sense that there was no literary activity before its composition. In fact, its composition has been accepted as an event in historical time. It is also quite possible that the Rāma story was prevalent much before the Rāmāyana was composed; but this does not make the Rāma-Kathā, the first story ever written by people. It is an Ādi Kāvya in the sense that it presents the basic story of mankind, acquaints us with the basic and eternal values of life.

The description of Ayodhyā and Lankā presents another important fact about human nature. Ayodhyā represents an antedote to Lankā. The culture and civilization of Lankā may be characterised as 'Sensate' (to borrow a word from P. Sorokin) and Ayodhyā's culture is idealistic. Generically speaking, Lankā represents pleasure and indulgence and Ayodhyā reflects the tradition of renunciation and sacrifice. The ways of the Rākṣasas are eloquent testimonies to the materialistic and voluptuous obsessions of them.

"Tato varārhāḥ suviśudhabhāvāsteṣāṃ striyastatra mahānubhāvaḥ
Priyeṣu pāneṣu ca saktabhāvā dadarsa tārā iva sup^{ṣv}rabhāvāḥ"

"Sriyā jvalantīstrapyopagūdhā nisīthakāle ramaṇopagūdhāḥ
 Dadarsa kāscit pramadopagūdhā yathā vihangāḥ kusumopagudhāḥ."
 "Anyāḥ punarharṃyatalopavistāstatra priyāṅkeṣu sukhopaviṣṭāḥ
 Bhartuḥ priyā dharmaparā nivistā dadarsa dhīmanmadanābhivistāḥ"
 "Aprāvṛtāḥ kāncanrajivarṇāḥ kācitparārdhyāstapaniyavarnāḥ
 Punaśca Kāscinchalākṣmavarṇāḥ kāntaprahīṇā ṛṣirāṅgavarṇāḥ."¹

Contrary to this, one comes across altogether a different mode of social setting.

"Ayodhyā nāma nagri tatrāsītlokavisṛtā
 Manunā mānavendreṇa yā purī nirmītā svayam
 "Tām tu rājā Dasaratho mahārāstravivardhanaḥ
 Purīmāvāsayāmāsa divā devapatiryathā."²

"Sarve narāśca nāryasca dharmasīlāḥ susamjātāḥ
 Uditāḥ sīlavṛttābhyām maharṣaya ivāmalāḥ."³

The character portrayal of Rāvaṇa appears to be paradoxical. Though he is portrayed as the embodiment of evil, he is also found to talk of Dharma. Rāvaṇa has erudition but he is bereft of discrimination and wisdom. He knows what is Dharma and Adharma but acts in supercilious disregard of the former. His dialogue with Sitā bears an unmistakable

1. S.K. 5-17, 18, 19, 20.
 2. B.K. 5-6, 9.
 3. B.K. 6-9.

reflection of his righteous thinking. He assures Sītā that though having been actuated by Rākṣasa nature he has abducted her yet the very wons of Dharma constrain him from touching her without her consent.

"Neha kecinmanuṣyā vā rākṣasāḥ kāmarūpiṇaḥ
 Vyaparsarpatu te Sīte ^{bhay} ~~amattaḥ~~ samuthitaṁ
 Svadharmo rakṣasāṁ bhīru sarvatheiva na saṁsayāḥ
 Gamaṇaṁ vā parastrīṇāṁ haraṇaṁ saṁpramathya vā."¹

This stands as a striking contrast to the occasion when he throws all considerations of morality to forewinds in kidnapping Sītā having ignored the persuasive advice and admonitions of Mārīca, Jatāyu and subsequently, flouting the advice of Vibhīṣaṇa and turning a deaf ear to the well meaning and timely precepts of Mālyavāna and Nikasā and ignoring the wise counsels of Kumbhakarna and even his wife Mandodari. He wavers between Dharma and Adharma. He is found to be appealing to Dharma when it is conducive or expedient to his baser designs. Rāvaṇa uses his knowledge of Dharma to justify his own ways. This indicates that in spite of his knowledge and erudition, he is devoid of wisdom and virtue. When Vibhīṣaṇa seeks to dissuade him from killing Hanumāna, the messenger as that would militate against the very ethics of

1. S.K. 20-4, 5.

statecraft, Rāvaṇa retorts that "enemy has to be killed even though it amounts to an evil action (Akarma)."

"Na pāpānāṃ badhe pāpaṃ vidyate satṛsūdana
Tasmādēvaṃ badhisyaṃi vānaraṃ pāpakāriṇaṃ."¹

Vālmīki does not advocate a mechanical obedience to Dharma. Dharma has to be internalised. It has to come from within. Mere memorisation of the principles of Dharma and quoting the scriptures do not make one Dhārmic. It is the attitudes, ideas, beliefs and above all actions that are sure index to the Dhārmic nature of man. It is the externally manifested behaviour that affords the test criteria for determining whether a person is virtuous or vicious for, every action is preceded by a motive or intention; more so in case of the righteous action. What distinguishes an act from a mere event is that an action is amenable to explanation in terms of reason whereas it is not the case with an event. Both actions and events do have causes. But the former is intelligible in terms of reasons or justifications; whereas the latter is explained in terms of its causal antecedents. In the Vālmīki's scheme of things, all human actions are justifiable by an appeal to the principles of Dharma. Dharma is the highest court of appeal. It is Dharma alone which impregnates human actions with meaning and

1. S.K. 52-11.

significance. Without it, an action will be a mere event in the spatio-temporal parameters. This is exhibited in and through all the characters. The action of Daśaratha in banishing Rāma may look absurd and unintelligible from the pragmatic viewpoint. How can a king, a father send his beloved son, the heir king to the forest on the eve of his coronation ceremony? But it perfectly makes sense and is made intelligible when seen in the context of Dasaratha executing his sacred oath made to Kaikeyī. Daśaratha does not flinch from the path of Dharma in fulfilling his resolve, even though otherwise, it meant despair, infamy and even death on account of sending his dearest one to the forest.

Rāma's reluctance to return to Ayodhyā in spite of the prayers and persuasions of Bharata, the widowed mothers and the subjects may appear irrational from the utilitarian view point but it is construed as the height of righteousness, nobility and renunciation, when considered in the context of Rāma's resolute commitment to Dharma which consists in obeying the wishes of his father. Similarly, Bharata's steadfast refusal to ascend the throne might make him appear as an innocent fool, to a commoner but Bharata remains proverbial for the height of his self-abnegation for the cause of Dharma. Thus, the rationale or justification behind every action is to be sought with reference to the highest values.

Vālmīki does not divinise values. Rather they are presented in and through the concrete human situations. The characters are not deified. Rather, the poet invests them with human frailties, so that they do not appear as remote, far removed from the reach of the mortals but as the true and real objects of emulation. Even Rāma, the embodiment of perfections is found to be giving into despair, disappointment, wrathfulness and scepticism. The poetic justice is preserved by endowing the characters with human imperfections. Thus, the epic can be said to be a positive attempt in the direction of institutionalisation of values.

The Rāmāyana portrays the picture of an idealistic social set up. It does not treat state as an end in itself but as an agency instrumental for the preservation and propagation of Dharma. The King is not the sovereign but the custodian, the trustee (Nyāsi) and the state is the trust (Nyāsa). It is left to the historians to determine as to whether such a state of affair really prevailed or the conditions were just the reverse, i.e., the kings were oppressive, the subjects, tortured and exploited. But in the Rāmāyana there is no scriptural sanction to it. It rather advocates a form of constitutional monarchy. The king is surrounded by a galaxy of wise and erudite counsellors, tendering advice as and when the exigencies arise. Even

though Daśaratha is determined to enthrone Rāma, the righteous and the first born, he convenes the assembly to seek the ratification of the counsellors for the same. This prevents the ruler from falling a prey to the whims and caprices.

The concept of state as envisaged in the Rāmāyaṇa is not totalitarian. In the totalitarian scheme of things the individual is called upon to sacrifice his interest in the interest of the state, the collectivity and the group. Majority is given precedence over minority, society over the individual. But in the epic one finds just a reverse picture. It is neither the individuals nor the society that count but it is the principles of righteousness or Dharma that are paramount. On occasions, the voice of the individual or minority is found to have been given priority over the majority. Rāma banishes Sītā on the basis of stray murmurings of his subjects with regard to Sītā's residence in the abode of Rāvāṇa. Rāma may appear cruel, unjust, unrealistic and undemocratic in banishing innocent Sītā, the expectant mother. It is sometimes argued that Rāma should have treated Sītā at least as one of his subjects and dispense the justice accordingly or could have made alternative shelter for her within his kingdom instead of sending her to the forest. This argument seems to be too tenuous. The choice is between

the beloved consort and the voice of the subjects. Rāma decides in favour of the latter. Rāma was well aware of the innocence, integrity and proven chastity of Sitā in the fire ordeal. Even then he banishes her in order to respect the sentiment of the populace. Does this act justify the status quo? It is sometimes claimed that the Indian epics justify the status quo. They propagate values that subserve the interest of the ruling class and the privileged. But the Rāmāyana as representative epic, suggests to the contrary. The sufferings of Dasaratha, the tests and trials of Rāma and Sitā go to suggest the primacy and preponderance of Dharma in all affairs of the state. Everything else is subordinate to it. Now it is up to the historians to conjecture, if the epic justifies status quo.

Dharma is construed to be pivotal. In the event of the conflict between the personal interest and the interest of the people, the king sacrifices the former for the sake of the latter. This is exemplified in Rāma's reluctance to accept Sītā after victory and the subsequent banishment of Sitā to the forest. But when there is conflict between the voice of the people and the considerations or observance of Dharma the king is to adhere to the latter, even though it is at the cost of the former. This finds its substantiation

in Daśaratha's commitment to fulfill the wishes of Kaikeyī, even though it was against the wishes and sentiments of the subjects. All these bear eloquent testimonies to the fact that Dharma is basic, pivotal and paramount. The considerations of Dharma prevail over any other consideration whatsoever.

Vālmīki does not treat Dharma as an ascriptive concept. One does not become righteous or Dhārmic by being born into a particular family. This has to be achieved, earned. All the creatures, humans and the non-humans have the divine ancestry. They spring from the same divine source.

"Aditestu sutā vīra jagṛhustāmaninditām
Asurāstena daiteyāḥ surāstenāditeḥ sutāḥ."¹

Both Rāma and Rāvaṇa have the same divine origin. One is given to the life of sacrifice and renunciation and the other, to the life of indulgence. One is extolled and eulogised as the God incarnate; the other, decried and condemned as the evil incarnate. This goes to show that no one is deva or dānava by birth. One becomes so by one's actions and ways. Merit is earned not endowed. Greatness is acquired but not bequeathed. Seen in this light, the Rāmāyaṇa can be treated as a representative specimen of the Upanisadic ethos and tradition.

1. B.K. 45-25.

To sum up; the values enshrined in the Rāmāyana are humanistic. Though the term 'humanism,' is associated with 'renaissance' in Europe, it was not unknown to the Indian tradition. As a matter of fact, humanistic spirit is very much embedded in the very culture and tradition of India. If by 'humanism,' we mean a reflective and critical temper of mind, freedom and dignity of the individual, a method of realising the self, then it will be a travesty of fact to say that the classical Indian tradition is not humanistic.

The Rāmāyana bears an unmistakable testimony to it. Though the values upheld by it are absolutistic in nature yet they are humanistic. In other words, 'absolutism' and 'humanism' are compatible. It is a mistake to suppose that in order for ^{the} value to be humanistic, it must be relative. One may argue that absolute values do not leave any room for freedom or choice and thereby undermine human worth and dignity. As against this, we would maintain that 'humanism' and 'absolutism' go together. It is rather that 'humanism' and 'relativism' are incompatible. If values are deemed to be relative and space-time contingent, it makes room for absolute freedom and may lapse into licentiousness. One would be free to find justification for any and every action. One may justify oppression and exploitation of others as a means to safeguard one's self interest on this score. But as such,

it goes against the humanity and makes 'humanism' inoperative. Humanism does not mean selfish interest; obsession with one's self or self aggrandizement. Humanism and 'welfare of all' (Sarvodaya) go together. One entails the other. Moreover, if norms are construed to be relative then ideally; there would be as many norms as there are individuals. This makes the values individualistic. Values, per se, are the integrating principles. They aim at harmonising, synthesising the varied and conflicting interest of the individuals, groups and societies. So, the concept of 'relative value' is contradiction in terms.

Absolute value makes sufficient room for exercise of human choice and freedom and thereby ensures human dignity. Values are action-guiding principles. As norms, they are different from actions. Values are absolute in the sense that they lend justifications to **all action; actual and possible.**

A value system is a necessary corollary of a metaphysical world view (Weltanschauung). The values enunciated in the Rāmāyana are holistic. They encompass within their purview not only the humans but also the non-human species. They transcend the considerations of time and clime, communities and race. This value system has its unmistakable root in the Upanisadic world view, so lucidly expressed in the opening stanza of Isopanisad.

"Isāvāsyam̐ idam̐ sarvam̐ yat kinca jagatyām̐ jagat
Tenatyaktena bhunjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam̐."¹

Since the world is pervaded by Brahman it leaves no room for hatred, conflict and animosity. Love, sacrifice and renunciation are the eternal values that define and determine the moral worth of an action.

If humanism means individual freedom, dignity and self enjoyment, the Rāmāyana is the embodiment of humanistic values. Self enjoyment does not mean self indulgence. It means self sacrifice and renunciation, which constitute the key note of the Rāmāyana.

1. Isa - 1.

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