

# The Ramayana is a rich Socio-cultural and Literary Heritage for the Entire Humanity

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## **Abstract:**

The present research paper is an attempt to analyze, examine and explore our understanding the rich socio-cultural and literary heritage and ethical human values projected and highlighted in Maharishi Valmiki's Ramayana and its impact to the entire humanity. It is a religious book of Hindus and is considered a national epic in many other Asian countries. It is not only a great epic but a record of rich cultural and literary heritage of the entire humanity. It is a literary treasure of moral values and ethics which enlightens human beings about high moral values, spiritual activities, conduct of life, faith, patience and social responsibilities, holistic education and war policy. Each and every character of the Ramayana and their incidents provide the clear ideas and wisdom to common life and help to find out the right path for mankind. It belongs to the entire humanity because it is capable of serving as a code of ethics for human beings and to bind the people of India and abroad as well and teaches us humanity, regardless of their caste, creed, colour and religion. The time has come to revive ancient Indian wisdom and follow the path of righteousness carved by Indian sages and national heroes. The findings present that the values projected in this ancient Indian epic is a priceless cultural and literary heritage to the world which hold great impact and relevance on the lives and literature of the entire humanity as well as which inspires and motivates to people in their difficult situations and hardship and encourages them to help in their pursuit of meaningful and peaceful living.

**Keyword:** The Ramayana, Moral Values and Ethics, Social Responsibilities, Literary-cultural Heritage, and Impact of Ancient Indian Wisdom etc.

## **Introduction:**

Generally Indian people start their day with addressing Ram-Ram, Jay Siya Ram, Jay Ram ji, Jay Shree Ram (*which means- Namaskar or Namaste*) while they meet and address to each-other especially in village areas. What is this; yes of course this is the real influence and impacts of Ramayana in day to day life and literature of human beings. There are two greatest ancient epics in India i.e. The Ramayana and Mahabharata. The Ramayana is one of the greatest epic in ancient India. It is a religious book of Hindus and is considered a national epic in many other Asian countries as well. It is not only a great epic but a record of rich socio-cultural and literary heritage of the entire humanity in the world. It is a literary treasure of moral values and ethics which enlightens human beings about high moral values, spiritual activities, conduct of life, faith, patience and social responsibilities, holistic education and war policy. Each and every character of the Ramayana and their incidents provide the clear ideas and wisdom to common life and help to find out the right path for mankind. It belongs to the entire humanity because it

is capable of serving as a code of ethics for human beings and to bind the people of India and abroad as well, regardless of their caste, creed, colour and religion.

The Ramayana was written by Maharishi Valmiki. Many scholars estimate that the earliest stage of the text range from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, with later stages extending up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. It contains 24000 verses and has been divided into 7 Kandas. The Ramayana narrates the life story of Rama, a legendary prince of Ayodhya city in the Kingdom of Kosala. The epic follows his 14 year exile to the forest urged by his father king Dashratha, on the request of Rama's stepmother Kaikeyi; his travels across forests in the Indian subcontinent with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana, the kidnapping of Sita by Ravana- the king of Sri Lanka, that resulted in war; and Rama's return to Ayodhya to be crowned king amidst jubilation and celebration<sup>1</sup>. The Ramayana provides justice in society, equality and mannerism and it teaches us how to live and to be live. There is no exaggeration if one can say that the Ramayana is a right path and a pioneer to the entire humanity.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

- The study will enable us to gather a comprehensive knowledge about the Ramayana as a rich socio-cultural and literary heritage.
- To explore the impact of Ramayana on the lives of the entire humanity.
- To understand the importance of Ramayana in our day to day life.
- To understand the role of the Ramayana in fostering unity and harmony among diverse communities by emphasizing universal human values such as love, compassion and righteousness.
- To preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the Ramayana which includes its literature, traditions and values for future generations.
- To explore the historical importance of the Ramayana as a testament of ancient Indian approach and civilization and its impact on various aspects of society.

Hence, in order to find out the objectives of this research work, the following research methodology has been carried out.

### **Research Methodology:**

Discourse and textual analysis method have been used in order to find out the objectives of the study. The findings have been supported with the help of the Ramayana as well as a significant numbers of several research articles which have been written by scholars and in-depth analysis of research articles, translations related to the Ramayana have been carried out for understanding and considered to do the framework of this paper which connect us with India's rich socio-cultural and literary heritage of Ramayana and its impacts in the lives of people in this ever changing world.

### **Review of Literature:**

Several scholars and writers have contributed to the research and analysis of the Ramayana and its significance in various aspects of human life. These are the notable researchers and scholars who have already done the research work and contributed to the study of Ramayana and its impact on the various aspects of society.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramayana>

1. Jones, Sir William (1799): Jones was considered one of the founding fathers of Indology, he translated the parts of the Ramayana into English and also focused to draw parallels between Sanskrit, Greek and other languages.
2. Monier, Williams (1872): He wrote “Sanskrit –English Dictionary” which provides a very comprehensive of Sanskrit terms and their meanings, which helped in the study of the Ramayana.
3. Griffith, Ralph (1884): He translated of the Ramayana into English and marked the beginning of its popularity in the West.
4. Ramanujan, A.K. (1973): In his famous work “Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts of Translation” he highlighted the diverse interpretations of the Ramayana across various regional languages and cultures.
5. Raghathan (1997): He focused and provided a comprehensive overview of the Ramayana’s cultural significance and its influences of Indian society in his book “Ramayana: A Cultural History”.
6. Devy, G.N. (2003): Devy’s book entitled “The Indian Literary Renaissance: 1932-1992” discusses the impact of the Ramayana on modern Indian Literature and its role in the literary renaissance.
7. Ghosh, G.S. (2010): Ghosh’s book entitled “The Ramayana: A Cultural History” provides a comprehensive account of the Ramayana and its cultural influences throughout history.
8. Balangadharan, S.N. (2012): He explored the Ramayana’s cultural significance and its role in shaping Indian Values and traditions in his famous book “The Ramayana: A Cultural Text”.
9. Sharma, Arvind (2013): Sharma’s “The Ramayana: A Bridge to Indian Culture” delves into the cultural and philosophical aspects of the Ramayana and its relevance to contemporary society.
10. Ventakesh, G. (2017): Venkatesh explores the moral and philosophical lessons embedded in the Ramayana and their relevance to modern society in his book “The Ramayana: An Epic of Values”.

While reviewing the literature on concerned relevant topics then it is found that many research works have already been done on the Ramayana and these researchers and scholars have mainly focused and contributed significantly to the understanding the appreciation of the Ramayana and its cultural influence on Indian society. But still, there is an urgent need to do more research work on remaining aspects of Ramayana like its impact on the lives and literature of entire humanity and how and why it is called a rich and priceless cultural heritage in India and Abroad as well. Hence, the research work on above topic is much needed in present scenario which definitely will complete the gap of research work on Ramayana and the findings will be beneficial for the society.

### **The Ramayana as a rich Heritage:**

The Ramayana is a rich heritage of entire humanity as we can see the impact of Ramayana in each and every field of life and literature of entire humanity. At present scenario, there is a race to lead one country into another one and the contemporary issues such as making the United Nations pressurize the neighbouring countries, implementing imperialistic policies and exercising the right of supremacy over others are a regular feature; in these circumstances, ongoing unrest prevails. Normalizing these issues can be accomplished by following the path paved by Lord Rama. Valmiki’s Ramayana is the source of the socio-cultural and literary heritage to the world. It is a unique epic which has been most popular, universally read and widely circulated literary work throughout India and many other Asian countries as well. It also enlightens human beings about high moral values, spiritual advancement, familial and social responsibilities, holistic education, war policy, statecraft, etc. In today’s society, high materialism

and unfavourable results often dissuade the students and make them depressed. It has been composed in different regional languages and all these are considered as the treasure of Indian culture and literature. If we talk about in Indian villages, the influence of Ramayana is not only the epic for them but it is existed in the form of narrative among the masses. The villagers read and sing the Shloka of Ramayana with their musical instruments in the evening especially in the month of Sawan. The story of Rama extended its impact in the life of common men; it is the manner of family tradition, ideals and also in the day to day livelihood. It can be easily traced out that the relation between the Ramayana and common livelihood in this great epic. The story of Ramayana is presented through Ramleela which is the main cultural exposure of Hindu religion. This is a special festival for all over the country and even people from abroad have been come to witness the cultural feasts of Ramleela programme which is presented in many parts of the country. The popularity of the Rama-story spread throughout India so widely that the story is heard or read with pleasure and piety in the palaces as well as in the hovels. The story of Ramayana is talked and enchanted everywhere in the country by hearts. There is also a unique impression of Ramayana in the Temples in India that's why it can be said that this is not only a great epic but also emerged as a literature and a cultural heritage of India. Across India we can see its impact on the life and literature of entire humanity.

### **Influence of Ramayana in the World Literature:**

The influence of Ramayana is clearly visible in every aspect of life and literature and it earns the distinction of great antiquity in the world literature. It is still accepted as a splendiferous literary work for all times due to its universal appeal in affording perpetual solution of all the problems that confront us in every aspect in human life. There is, probably, no other work in the world literature, which has exercised such a great influence on the mind, life and literature and thoughts of the entire humanity. The Ramayana gives us how to live life and it also teaches us what is right and what is wrong as well as it reveals from evil to good. Valmiki composes the epic, merging religion with morality and statesmanship with common sense, in such a manner that it presents an excellent combination of Sociology, Philosophy, Arthashastra, History and Ethics.

As the epic beautifully presents the ideal relationship between individuals of a family, for example; between the brothers, between the husband and wife, between the mother and son and so on, its appeal remains ever-lasting to all the peoples of our country and Abroad. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, while commenting on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, says- "They deal with the early days of the Indo-Aryans, their conquests talks about civil wars, when they were expanding and consolidating themselves, but they were composed and compiled later. I do not know of any books anywhere which have exercised such a continuous and pervasive influence on the mass mind as these two."<sup>2</sup> Obviously both these books are not only religious books in India but also these are the pioneer of life for entire humanity.

### **Impacts of Ramayana on the Life and Literature of entire humanity:**

The Ramayana has influenced on the family life and social life, culture and literature of the people dwelling various parts of India and abroad. It occupies a unique place in the area of literary development and religious thoughts. Its unique impacts are clearly visible on the life and culture of every people in India and Asian countries as well. We can see especially in the village areas in India, we find that the

<sup>2</sup> Jawaharlal, "The Discovery of India", P-99.

Ramayana is sung by the villagers in many different ways generally in the month of July. The devotee crowd and cry with addressing to Prabhu Ram, 'O Lord' we request to you please remove our miseries and our pain. The devotees who have unconditional faith on Prabhu Ram so they believe on Lord Ram that you are the only one who can overcome the sorrow in our life. What is this, yes this is the real impact of Ramayana in the life of each and every people of India. Moreover, the Ramayana is not only the religious book but also an ethical code of conduct of the Hindus. It teaches us how to become an ideal king, ideal father, mother, son, brother, servant, husband and ideal wife and how should we behave in our day to day life. The impact and influence of Ramayana is not only wide spread in the life of entire humanity but it is one the greatest ancient literary treasure of the world as well. The people who are illiterate even they can also chant, sang and understand by hearts so definitely we can say that the Ramayana is the real socio-cultural and literary heritage for entire humanity. Each and every tales and stories of Ramayana teaches us actual lesson of ethical values and humanity. Each tales and stories of Ramayana has been projected and highlighted by Marahsri Valmiki is unique like the sincerity in keeping the promise and his fondness for his son of king Dasarath's are unique. Kausalya's sense of duty or Sumitra's spirits of sacrifice are unparalleled and Lakshmana's reverence towards his elder brother and his brother's wife is simply amazing. The overall characteristics of Ram are unparalleled and inexpressible in words. To speak in brief, in the Ramayana, we find living examples of highest moral values of life.

Thus, there is no doubt whatever the impact existed in the society of the Ramayanic age is surely extended ages beyond. The impression and influence of Ramayana will existing forever in the life and literature of entire humanity. The Ramayana has made a great impact in the literature in India and Abroad in various ways. Its use of Alamkaras, sentiments, description of nature, subject-matter and plot-making - all these things are copiously imitated by the poets of succeeding generations. The poets of later periods use some words or convey some senses in their poetic compositions, which appear as the facsimile of Valmiki's work. The latter Sanskrit poets and dramatists have been greatly influenced by the epic Ramayana in selecting the subject matters of their works. The Ramayana is a great treasure and source of literature. Most of the ancient poets and dramatists wrote their works based on Ramayana. Even the great era-poet Kalidasa also wrote his world famous book *Raghuvansam*, taking the theme from the Ramayana. Bhavabhuti also took the subject matter and sentiments of pathos in his dramas from Ramayana. In this way, we can say that the Ramayana's impact is found everywhere in the life and literature of entire humanity.

### **Social Responsibilities in Ramayana**

Ramayana teaches us the lesson of moral education and social responsibilities. It can be said that it is a mirror of the social life of ancient India. The Ramayana teaches us about sincerely, obedience, truthfulness in our life, faithfulness and ethical and moral values. It teaches us how to live and to be live. Accordingly the people are adopting these good attributes in their lives. The high ideals of life as portrayed in the epic which directly influence to the Indian people in the field of their daily activities. The Ramayana has greatly impacted on the social-cultural life of human being which is clearly visible in many forms in our society. Sometimes we can see in our day to day life that people take Oath on Ramayana (Ramayana kee Kasam) for keeping the promise. The Ramayana has become the holy thing for the entire humanity. What is this, yes this is the real impact of Ramayana in the society. It helps us to create and build good characters and civilized person since young age. That is what the greatest ancient

Indian writer Shri Aurobindo says- “The work of Valmiki has been an agent of almost incalculable power in the moulding of the cultural mind of India: further Aurobindo says that it has presented to it to be loved and imitated in figures like Rama and Sita, made so divinity and with such a revelation of reality as to become objects of enduring cult and worship, or like Hanuman, Lakshaman, Bharata, the living human image of its ethical ideals, it has fashioned much of what is best and sweetened in the national character, and it has evoked and fixed in it those finer and exquisite yet firm soul-tones and that more delicate humanity of temperament which are a more valuable think than the formal outsides of virtue and conduct...”<sup>3</sup>

### **Feminist point of view in Ramayana:**

There are many female characters in Ramayana who represent their own stories and responsibilities. The protagonist female character of Ramayana is ‘Sita’ the goddess of Hindus. There is also a big question regarding the status and position of women in ancient India which reflects in present time as well. So, if we talk about Sita and her ‘Naari Dharma’ then we find throughout the epic, ‘Naari Dharm’ is taught, preached, glorified, evaluated and practiced by all the female characters. The protagonist of female characters in the Ramayana is Sita who is exemplary of the ‘ideal women’ and a source of inspiration to all the female in the society. Her endless loyalty and devotion towards her husband is unique and appraisable. Sita is undoubtedly the symbol of belief, faith, loyalty, grace, beauty and chastity as well as she is abiding to all the rules which is designed by the patriarchy. She is sacrificing herself only for the welfare of others. She never betrayed to her husband in any circumstances, this shows the unconditional love and support towards her husband.

However, it is wise not to ignore the fact that her grace was concealed and shrugged aside owing to the dominance of Lord Ram. In Indian society, always the story of Sita is told and retold to remind daughters, wives and mothers how they should behave and act in the society. It is very sad that a woman is glorified and treated respectfully only when she surrenders her dignity and mind. It is clearly seen that in ancient time also the male dominance prevailing in the society. The episode of Sita where she is asked to prove her chastity and loyalty by her husband Ram through “Agnee Pareeksha” (a trial by fire). This episode is particularly significant in contemplating the relevance of Ramayana. But here also in such difficult situation no one has come to support her, a single woman shows her courage and determined herself and fight against enemy and played her role in difficult situations, she is asked to prove her purity not only once but twice. Certain dialogues like, “*Main apki dasi hu swami; Pati Swami ka roop hota hai; Stree Swami ki charan hoti hai.*” are flawed and problematic on multiple levels. Worshipping husbands as god epitomizes unequal relationship that is glorified and set as a precedent instead of questioning the inequality. This is unjust. So, now it is a high time to destroy such type of taboo in the society. Because if our foundation is so unequal, how can we think about the pyramid is equal. These events and activities mirror to us the actual status and reality of the society that breathes patriarchal system. The Ramayana, though the pioneer of human being and embodiment of fairness, it also could not escape the patriarchal dominance. So there is urgent need to give the proper respect and dignity to women and allow them the right to define herself on her own terms.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the Ramayana teaches us what is right and what is wrong in the society.

<sup>3</sup> Aurobindo, “*The Foundation of India Culture*,” pp-290.

<sup>4</sup> [feminisminindia.com](http://feminisminindia.com), “*Revisiting Ramayana..*,”

### Great Impacts in the entire Humanity:

The influences of Ramayana in the religious life of the Indians also a clearly visible in that period which reflections still remains in the contemporary world also. The monkey chief Hanuman is also worshiped as a deity, who saves hapless people from calamities. The Ramayana songs are performed before huge audience composed with people of all the castes and classes through Ramleela programmes. It would be pertinent to mention here that the reflection made by Maharshi Valmiki exhibits that the people of that period have a great respect for their parents and elders, absence of which is regarded as an offence. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the Ramayana inspire millions of lives in India and abroad in the past, inspires today and will inspire in the future also.

The education system as reflected in the Ramayana is based on Gurukula. In this system of education, the students are entitled to take their education, residing in the houses of their Gurus. The Gurus/preceptors bear all the expenditure of their students. The preceptors or sages, who have the capacity to bear the expenditure of and to give the shelter to ten thousands students, are entitled to get the title of Kulpati.<sup>5</sup> There is a need to reform the existing educational system and curriculum in India and in this connection; the ministry of education, Govt. of India has initiated a holistic education policy i.e. New Education Policy NEP: 2020 which inserts the *Ramayana* and *Ramacharitmanas* in the syllabus. The implementation of NEP 2020 is also a very-very necessary for holistic education and promotes to study about Indian Knowledge System, which has already been inserted the Ramayana in the syllabus of their new curriculum. Definitely, the students will learn about moral education, ethics, Good leadership, Non-violence, Decision making power, proper goal-setting in their life, tolerance, nature of respect, patience, and devotion from the holy book of Ramayana.

### Findings:

The Ramayana gives the clear message about universal brotherhood, *Vashudhaiva Kutumbkam* (One Earth, One Family) and unity among all the people of the world. It is valued more for its ideals. Ideal father, ideal mother, ideal son, ideal brother, ideal husband, ideal ruler, all male ideals are equated with Rama. Hanuman is a loyal servant, Laksmana and Bharata are ideal brothers and so on. And another side, Sita is the symbol and epitome of all ideals of womanhood in the society. However, there is still an urgent need to maintain the equality of gender injustice so that the foundation of society can be constructed equally. It teaches about dharma of a good king or leader where one's duty is more important than one's emotions, society is more important than individual. It is a mirror which tells us that how to lead a morally and spiritually enriched peaceful life in this highly materialistic world. In this Dark Age, there is no other guide, no proper yoga, or sacrifice, no mantra, no regimen or ritual; but to remember Rama, to sing the glory of Rama and ever listen to Rama's countless virtues which is pioneering the right path to entire humanity.

Thus we can say that the each story of Ramayana struggles inspire and prepare us to face hardships of life fearlessly because nothing has been impossible for him. Shri Ram had set a moral belief in respecting diverse cultures. Shri Ram never imposed his cultural beliefs on anyone in Sri Lanka or elsewhere. There had been no single character in the saga of Ram who would have felt belittled. Even a commoner like Kevat had the privilege to argue with Shri Ram, but he paid respect to him with a smile. He is the one who had built self-esteem in people, injected self-respect into unconscious Ahilya, and appointed Angad as his representative to visit Sri Lanka, despite the enmity with his father. Since

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<sup>5</sup> Valmiki, "Ramayana" 4

antiquity, the epic and the character of Shri Ram have been guiding force for the entire humanity. The time has come to revive ancient Indian wisdom and follow the path of righteousness carved by great Indian sages and national heroes. The present paper is focused on the above emergent socio-cultural and literary issues to awaken our understanding and connect us with India's rich literary cultural heritage. The holy religious book Ramayana teaches us how to live and to be live. Each and every episodes of Ramayana teaches us about how ones pious duty to perform in the welfare of the society.

The findings reveal that the values injected in this spiritual text are timeless jewels which hold great relevance in the lives of modern youth to aid in their pursuit of meaningful living and helping them to cast off the delusion arising out of materialistic attitude, material prosperity, and erosion of values and loss of morals. As far as the present research paper has concerned that the Ramayana reminds and teaches us a lesson how we should behave and perform our duty in our day to day life. Each character gives the clear impressions on the mind of the people. No doubt it is a source of learning ethical and moral values for all the persons. We should learn from the ethical and core values from the Ramayana and it should be our duty to forward the essence and message to younger generation.

### **Conclusion:**

The findings present that the values projected in this ancient Indian epic is a priceless cultural and literary heritage to the world which hold great impact and relevance on the lives and literature of entire humanity as well as which inspires and motivates to people in their difficult situations and hardship and encourages them to help in their pursuit of meaningful and peaceful living. It is not only a great epic but a record of rich cultural and literary heritage of the entire humanity. It is a literary treasure of moral values and ethics which enlightens human beings about high moral values, spiritual activities, conduct of life, faith, patience and social responsibilities, holistic education and war policy. Each and every character of the Ramayana and their incidents provide the clear ideas and wisdom to common life and help to find out the right path for mankind. It belongs to the entire humanity because it is capable of serving as a code of ethics for human beings and to bind the people of India and abroad as well and teaches us humanity, regardless of their caste, creed, colour and religion. The time has come to revive ancient Indian wisdom and follow the path of righteousness carved by Indian sages and national heroes. The time has come to revive ancient Indian wisdom and follow the path of righteousness carved by Indian sages and national heroes. The Ramayana is capable of bringing positive social changes in human beings by imparting moral values such as tolerance, cooperation, sense of equality, human freedom and dignity. Respect for women can be taught by teaching the examples of women who are ever-suffering yet brave, highly patient, devoted, loyal, forgiving and compassionate towards all. There is always need to organize such type of seminars periodically which promotes to rethink the relevance of the ancient epics and the hidden timeless ethics in modern times which needs to be realized by scholars, policy makers, teachers and parents for imparting necessary values among the people of India and Abroad. The higher educational institutions must have to promote the practice of speech austerity and spread awareness of the rich, value laden cultural heritage of India. Teachers, parents and elders should become good role models by imbibing these ancient values and imparting them to the youth. Practice of self-control, disciplined life and meditation should be taught to all. The great epic Ramayana teaches us that how to live, moral values, how to respect to our elders and younger ones, social responsibility, respect of women, patience, faith and also teaches us what is right and what is wrong in our day to day life.



It is undoubtedly a great pioneer for entire humanity. The impact of Ramayana is not confined in India but it is extended to others countries as well. It is definitely a great and rich cultural heritage. The Ramayana has gained immense popularity all over the world for its poetics qualities and pioneering the righteous path for entire humanity. In a nutshell, the Ramayana as an epic narrative holds an immense significance in Indian culture and literature. The Ramayana is a timeless and rich socio-cultural treasure and heritage that continues to inspire and influence generations and its roles in shaping human values and civilization. The everlasting appeal of these treaties still impacts on the life, culture, behaviour and literature of entire humanity in this present global scenario.

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