HUMAN RELATIONS AND EMOTIONS IN VALMIKI'S RAMAYANA

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Abstract

The Ramayana, Adi Kavya, is the universal epic of human relations and emotions. Its grandeur is attributed to Valmiki, Adi Kavi's poetic merits, artistic excellence and technical brilliance. Its origin is due to Valmiki witnessing the incident of a hunter killing one of a pair of Krauncha birds and the surviving bird 's experiences on its separation from its partner. The intensity of the bird's suffering shapes Valmiki's poetic expression. Valmiki portrays diverse characters that are two types—humans and demons. Among the character, Sri Rama is quintessential to all humans in following the path of virtues, the path of rectitude in all generations. Next to Rama, Sita is symbolic of exceptional qualities: fidelity and purity as Rama's wife. Other characters like Lakshmana, Bharata, and Hanuman are characters of virtues and values. Rama is for the welfare of the people. As a king, his kingship is exemplary and his kingdom is called Rama Rajya. There are characters to represent vices and cruelties. Ravana as a demon is responsible for the separation of Sita from Rama. As a result, Sita and Rama, their near and dear suffered for no fault of theirs. The epic expresses their heart moving emotions through characters. The characterisation of the Ramayana is superb. Their dialogues, as the dramatic element of the epic reflect their emotions for human relations. Rama ultimately has success over the evil of Ravana.

Keywords: *Valmiki, Adi Kavi, Ramayana, Adi Kavya, universal epic, origin, incident, killing, one of pair, Krauncha birds, human, relations, emotions, Rama and Sita, separation, characterization, dialogues, feelings, dramatic element, success, virtue, Ravana, evil.*

Poetry of sublime themes and lofty ideas shines forever in any form and structure as universal work of art. Epics, Purans, Upanishads and Vedas belong to this category. What sparks in my mind, when we talk of poetry? It is the Ramayana, the universal epic with its grandeur that dawns in the core of my mind. It keeps echoing in my mind in the form of enlightening lessons and preaching sermons. It is known to the common human as it is associated with him. It keeps telling us the human relations and revealing human emotions of its characters. When two brothers are very close, loving each other, people acclaim them Rama and Lakshmana. When the people are happy under a ruler, the ruling is called Rama Rajya, the kingdom of Rama. Hence, the Ramayana teaches human virtues and cultural values, pivotal and essential for mankind.

It is surely the Ramayana, the Adi Kavya and it is Adi Kavi Valmiki of the world literature. It is the epic far reaching and wide ranging with its essential characteristics: literary structure, poetic beauty, narrative, technical brilliance and artistic excellence. It is a judicious treasure of concepts: love, affection, sacrifice, duty, responsibility, compassion, courage and so on all together as a sign human dignity. It directly opposes and vehemently criticises evils, vices, profligacies,

hypocrisies, jealousies, avarice, lust, and so on, all together as a sign of cruelty. Hence, it portrays conflicts between humans and demons, virtues and vices, love and lust, softness and cruelty, joy and grief, ideals and prejudices, and so on.

The origin of the Ramayana is attributed to Valmiki witnessing the incident of a hunter killing one of a pair of Krauncha birds. The surviving bird experiences separation, resulting in grief. Valmiki witnesses its emotion of intense suffering. In response to its suffering, he is overwhelmed with grief and indignation. His emotional reaction leads to the narration of the Ramayana in metrical form,

"O hunter, may find no lasting rest,
Since you killed one of the pair of Krauncha birds." *Bālakaṇḍa*, 1.2.15

The intensity of suffering shapes Valmiki's poetic expression. The grief is transformed into verse forms of structured language. Sorrow becomes verse. Shoka turns Shloka. Valmiki describes many incidents like Rama's exile, Sita's separation from Rama, the destruction of Lanka and so on shape Valmiki's poetry as he is poet of compassion. He portrays Rama's character with his focus on the relationship between personal desire, social obligation, moral responsibility and human suffering as the origin of Sanskrit poetry as it emerges from the recognition of human suffering.

Valmiki portrays diverse characters that are diametrically opposed to each other. They are mainly two types: humans and demons. Virtues and values are represented by the race of humanity and vices and evils are represented by the clan of demons, asuras. For example, Sri Rama, the central character is quintessential to all human beings to follow his path of virtues, the path of rectitude in all generations. Humans are bound to tread the path of truth and righteousness. Fellow human beings and the readers of the Ramayana in all generations have an indelible impression of divinity in Rama's character. Valmiki happens to ask sage Narada whether there exists a human with exceptional virtues: strength, righteousness, truthfulness, compassion and self-control, all good qualities in one. Next to Rama there is Sita, symbolic of fidelity and purity and is a true wife with exceptional qualities. Lakshmana, Bharata, Hanuman, Vibhishana and Sugriva are of the characters of virtues. There are sages, Valmiki himself, Vishwamitra, Vashishta and so on to teach morals and guide humans.

Valmiki's Ramayana's focus and fulcrum is the harmony of human relations, social concerns, cultural values, fraternal ties and so on in the welfare of the people. The king is for the people, and kingship is for the welfare of the peoples. The people are his sons and daughters in a family. The king is for kinship, justice, love, social order and it is sole goal in the welfare of society in his kingship.

Valmiki's Ramayana essentially teaches morals and ethics, virtues and values, relations and concerns as per the vision and mission of the epic. It ultimately leads the virtue to have victory over evil. It is the success of virtuous Sri Rama over the cruel Ravana. There is no flaw in the narration of Ramayana as Valmiki is good at composing and famous for his unrivalled literary merits. He does not have any influence of any epic on him as he happens to write the first kavya, the first epic

to be acclaimed as Adi Kavi to compose the first epic, Adi Kavya of world literature. The story of the Ramayana suits to his poetic imagination and sensibility and bestows on him preferential acclaims. His is closely associated with the Ramayana. All his merits: poetic beauty, narrative technique, artistic excellence and so on to help him maintain social virtues and cultural values, all together to portray human relations and emotions in the welfare of society. Valmiki is famous for his unrivalled literary merits. He aims at establishing human relations, annexing top priority to humanity. Humans are bound to tread the path of rectitude. He does not like humans to swerve from the path of truth and righteousness. The people of his generation and coming generations are to regard Rama as a model human to excel.

After Valmiki's Ramayana, poets like Goswami Tulsidas have their own visions and versions in composing the Ramayana. According to AK Ramanujan, they are three hundred versions of the Ramayana. Goswami Tulsidas' Rama Charita Manasa deals with Bhakti, giving devotional significance.

The story of Ramayana suits Valmiki's imagination and poetic virtues. His name is associated with the Ramayana as he creates it. The characteristics of the epic, attributed to him are his poetic merits, narrative technique, and artistic excellence in depicting human relations and emotions and cultural values. Robert Goldman opines that the Ramayana is read and revered in south and south-east Asian society and culture for Valmiki's exceptional merits. Its popularity is because of its central character Rama with exceptional qualities: virtues, values, strength, Dharma (righteousness), truthfulness, compassion and self-control.

The central character, Rama is the embodiment of these virtues for all to admire him highly. Valmiki happens to question Narada whether there is any person with extraordinary qualities of Rama. The answer is in the negative. He is the embodiment of all virtues especially truthfulness of a perfect man. For Rama, truthfulness is his strength,

"Rama, whose strength lies in Truth, gives to others and does not utter hurtful words, even when his own life is at stake." Sundarakanda: 5-33.25-26

Virtues endeared the people to Rama as his most ideal quality of a king for his ideal kingship. Rama went to exile, obeying his father Dasaratha's words revealed by Kaikeyi. Bharatha condemns Kaikeyi's actions,

"How can Kausalya and Sumitra, overwhelmed by grief for their son, love in fellowship with you, my mother?" Ayodhyakanda: 2.73.8-9

Rama has immense love and concern for all the three brothers and expresses it openly. Bharatha comes to him who was in exile to make an appeal to Rama to occupy the throne. Rama embraces Bharatha, expressing his emotions of love. He smells his brother's head, embraces him, places Bharatha upon his lap, and lovingly asked about his father. That was love of Rama for Bharatha and concern for his revered father,

"My dear brother, where is our father?

How have you come to this forest?"
Rama never expresses his concern for the throne. His concern is for the people of Ayodhya. He is not merely a prince craving kingship but a son for the family image. He is a king beloved and revered by the people,
"Because of his virtues, the prince became dear to the people as though he were their very life moving outside their bodies." Ayodhyakanda: 2.1.19
Rama's commitment to his father's word responsible for his exile. When Bharatha says that their father is no more. He does not like Rama to face the consequence of exile. Then Rama expresses his emotions on the demise of his father,
"Why was my righteous father destroyed by grief?
Why was Rama sent to exile?
Why did he have to go forest? Ayodhyakanda: 2.73. 7
Dasaratha's love for his four sons is immense. He treats all his sons equally. He rejects the appeal of Vishwamitra to send Rama with him,
All four of his sons were equally dear to him
Like the four arms that emerge from one's body. Ayodhyakanda:2.1.5
For the excellent composition of the Ramayana, Valmiki occupies a unique place at the beginning of the Sanskrit epic tradition with the portrayal of the characters like Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Dasaratha are strong and vital, compassionate and sacrificing, so on. Subsequently, poets like Goswamy Tulsidas attempted to compose the Ramayana with his own vision from his own perspective, giving Rama, Sita other characters of virtues, bestowing on them the status of divinity.
In what way is Valmiki different from other epic composers like Goswami Tulsidas in I6th Century? Characters in Valmiki's Ramayana are with humans of sublime virtues and lofty ideals representing the humanity, whereas those of Tulsidas are humans with the status of divines representing divinity. They are to fight demons with evil and cruel nature and have success over it.
For Valmiki, human is great; he is the creator. Rama is human, holding kingship to treat his people as his kith and kin, the members of his family. He is the incarnation of lord Vishnu. He incarnates as Rama to protect humans from devilish activities of demons like those of Ravana. Rama as the king of Ayodhya with his kingship as a boon to the people under his rule. The people acclaim his rule as Rama Rajya when they are happy under his rule. Rama's ideals are duty, kingship, loyalty and social responsibility come into a conflict, but he solves that conflict, achieving his goal of success over the evil.
Valmiki has his own human perspective in treating humans as the embodiment of good qualities but become victims to devils' cruelties and brutalities. Rama as a human eventually has victory over the evil. He is good at archery and other valiant activities. He is the embodiment of all virtues and values excelling others in all respects. He is a perfect human being and ideal king with truly human character. His dharma, relationships and heroic actions are commendable divine qualities with divine dimensions. He humbly obeys his father Dasaratha's words

and goes to live in exile. He honours his father's words rather than his right to the throne. He feels that to follow his fathers' words is his duty as son. His exile is not simply a simple political event. His Ramayana is the drama of humanity. Tulsidas gives the status of divinity to Rama, the incarnation of Sri Vishnu from his own point of view. For him it is a devotional epic, Bhakthi Kavya and teats Rama as Supreme God with divine grace incarnates as Rama, a human being.

Sita is wife, life partner, woman of exceptional strength and virtue according to Valmiki's Ramayana. She is intensely devotional, idealized embodiment of divine feminine virtue according to Goswami Tulsisdas' Ramayana. Valmiki portrays the character of Sita with qualities of pride and honour. She identifies herself,

"I am the daughter of Janaka, the daughter-in-law of Dasaratha, Sita by name, the wife of wise Rama." Sundarakanda: 5.33

Sita is delighted by love. Self-respect is her dignity. She is accustomed to gentle speech. She is never angry with her husband. She challenges Rama's decision,

Deeply agitated, Sita reproached the broad-chested Raghava,
Moved by the dignity of her own self-respect Ayodhyakanda:2.30.2

Sita has extraordinary attachment with Rama. She regrets her separation from him. It is the sign of Sita's conception of shared married life and conjugal companionship,

If you go to forest, I shall go with you
How could I remain here while you endure hardships there? Ayodhyakanda:2.27-30

Their treatment of relationships is different from each other. For Valmiki, it is morally conflicted. Dharma, duty, kingship, and human conduct are of Rama's philosophy as a king. For Goswami, it is deep devotion and idealised Bhakti that is divine grace surrendered to God in utmost devotion.

Lakshmana 's decision to following Rama in exile. He wants neither kingdom nor pleasure. His only desire is to remain with Rama. He says that he follows his brother Rama even in exile, supporting him all the time. He is angry with wrong doers and fight them as a warrior. His loyalty is appreciable. He expresses his readiness to serve his brother Rama.

Bharatha experiences anguish and moral responsibility. Rama says that Bharatha is his life outside. As brother he is praised by all in all generations. Rama expresses the view to him. That is the flawless fraternity of Rama and his brothers.

For Valmiki, Ravana is powerful, learned and complex antagonist whose cruelties lead him to downfall and destruction. For Goswami Tulsidas, Ravana is the antagonist of Divine Rama reaping the consequence of destruction for his cruel nature and brutal actions. Ravana experiences desire, pride and frustration.

Vibhishana has a special place in the epic of the Ramayana as he has good qualities. He tries to convince his bother Ravana in certain respects. He asks Ravana to set Hanuman free though he is their enemy. Vibhishana comes to Rama as a refuge. It is the noble gesture on the part of Rama as he treats his foe's brother as his dear. He declares his support to him as a sign of moral relationship,

"To one who approaches me even once and says 'I am yours' I grant fearlessness from all beings. This my solemn promise." Yuddhakanda: 6.18.33

Rama understands the pitiable situation of Sugreeva and displays same love for Sugriva alliance for mutual assistance. Friendship requires keeping one's promise, "Let our friendship be firm, I shall accomplish what is necessary for you, and you shall accomplish what is necessary for me." Kishkindakanda

Hanuman is heroic, intelligent, diplomatic and devoted as per Valmiki's Ramayana. For Goswami, Hanuman is model as a Bhakta, a devotee of Rama. He embodies courage, dedication to service and self-confidence. After a long search he approaches Sita respectfully,

"Hanuman, son of the wind, placed his folded hands upon his head and addressed Sita in gentle and respectable words." Sundarakanda: 5.33. 1-2

Hanuman was in his long search for Sita everywhere in the city of Lanka. He approaches her, addressing,

"If you are Sita, forcibly carried away by Ravana from Janasthana, tell me of your situation; may you be safe."

Hanuman recognises Sita when he says that Rama is in grief due to his separation from her. It is the expression of emotions the truthfulness, righteousness and the four purushasthras—Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

The descriptions of nature are integral to enrich the narrative excellence of the epic. The beauty of forests, rivers, mountains and so on is special for the greatness of Ramayana as an epic. The objects of nature share emotions of humans who share their feelings to flora and fauna.

There are abundant expressions of emotions in the form of dialogues as the sign of dramatic element to enrich the grandeur of the epic. There is the employment of epic similes to heighten its style.

Valmiki composes the epic of Ramayana with all its characteristics, excellent narration, graphic descriptions. Lively dialogues turning it a drama. Ethical element is an element of the epic in his own style. For Tulsidas, there are there are hymns, devotional concern, philosophical reflection and emotional Bhakthi, essential concern for devotion.

Conclusion

Valmiki as the first poet, Adi Kavi occupies the most significant place in the history of world literature in general and Indian classical literature in particular. His literary merits excel all others especially as an epic poet par excellence. He has distinctive characteristics of his own to mark a clear-cut difference in the world of literary firmament. He establishes himself as a poet of merits: poetic imagination, thematic significance, the portrayal of human emotions and relations and characterisation, the ethical awareness, narrative technique, and heart-appealing and artefact. His poetic acumen presents the psychology of characters like Rama, Sita, Bharata, Lakshmana, Hanuman and Ravana.

Every epic rises due to some strong events. Valmiki achieves a special place in transforming a heroic narrative into deep exploration of human experiences. He

achieves quintessential not only in the composing of the epic of unrivalled merits but also in portraying diverse characters.

Though, there are three hundred versions of the Ramayana, their diversity does not diminish Valmiki's unrivalled position. It enjoys the sense of universality for it tells the readers even today and in the future about importance of human relations and emotions.

The epic is significant as it is due to Valmiki's achievement in an extraordinary synthesis of poetry, narrative, ethics, philosophy, social observation of human relations and emotions. Robert Goldman observes its wide-spread influence on all the fields: the aesthetics, languages, literature, cultures, religions, politics and societies of not only Asia but also of the world.

Valmiki composes Ramayana to depict relationships of human beings and ideal kingship for his human relations with the people. There are other essential characteristics on narrative technique, the employment of similes, the description of nature, lively dialogues between the characters, description of war, expression of grief and love and so on all together made the epic universal. Valmiki is quintessential to all human beings in all generations to come in the coming of an epic. The Ramayana is the right choice of Valmiki in reaching his goal as an epic poet.

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