This research paper studied the story of Ramayana through a different perspective; that is, based on Monistic doctrines. I tried to analyse the characters and events in the story of Ramayana, and attempted to discover the different implications and dimensions of the story and its characters, in a transcendental, monistic perspective. The characters in Ramayana signify the different elements of monistic philosophy.

Key words: Brahman, mind, body, liberation.

INTRODUCTION

Literature, at its finest sense, is the articulation of human feelings, ideas and concepts in ornate language. Contemplating on various realms of life, man has compiled literary treatises on various subjects. Some of such texts influenced their contemporary and later readers since they either carried novelty in their expression of ideas or novelty in the idea presented. Sometimes the idea presented may be ordinary, and sometimes ethereal. Vedas, the most ancient texts of spiritual instruction, was written in ancient Sanskrit verses, later sages expressed the Vedic doctrines in simple way; which form a series of works known as Itihasas, Puranas, Dharma Shastras and Jnana Shastras. In every aeon, the sages composed Itihasas, of God's supervision of human affairs. The two prominent Itihasas in India's possession, The Ramayana and the Mahabharatha have been composed with Vedantic thoughts as its core. Valmiki Ramayana is said to be the first adorned poetry written by a single author. The work consists of twenty four thousand verses. The date of Ramayana is believed to be before 500 B.C. Valmiki Ramayana belongs to the greatest of all literature that has ever been written. Millions of people down the centuries have crossed the ocean of sorrowful life with the light spread out by Ramayana. We, Indians are really fortunate that we uniquely have this treasure, from where we can find the solution for whatever problem we encounter. Valmiki Ramayana consists of the essence of the Vedic wisdom especially, the Advaitic thought. This paper is an interpretation of Valmiki Ramayana on the basis of its connection with Monism.

Valmiki Ramayana is the story of the wanderings of Sri Rama from Ayodhya to Lanka, during the Threthayuga, about two million years ago. Sri Rama is believed to be the embodiment of God, or an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, for the purpose of subduing Ravana, who through his penance got very high powers, and misused them for fulfilling his wicked and lustful desires, in connection with the smrithi that;

"God will himself assume human form and labour for the destruction of the wicked (dushtanigrham) and the protection of the good (Sishtaparipalanam)"[ Bhagavad Gita4-7,8 ]

In the Advaitic point of view, in Ramayana, The absolute Brahman (God) is appearing as a human being, Sri Rama. It is clear that Rama is not presented just as a human hero in the story;
The story of Sri Rama, exemplifies the truest monistic concepts on the evolution of the universe, the momentary nature of life, the unity between the Ultimate Brahman and every human soul. The story of Ramayana is truly a telling of the secret of life.

Rama is one among the four sons of Dasaradha. Here we can see the concept of the "Chathurvidhya of Paramatman", which is explained well with the example of "Chitrapata" in which Paramatman is seen in four ways that is; “sudha”, the one without any connection with maya, "Isvara", one which is related with maya, The Hiranyakartha, The ruler of subconscious mind, and the Viratpurusha, the ruler of conscious mind [Siddh. 118-119].

These can be connected with the four brothers. Rama, who is not connected with maya or ignorance symbolizes Paramatman, Lakshmana, who is related with ignorance (maya), Satrughna can be placed as Hiranyakartha, and Bharatha (“bharanadbharathonama” [Adh.Ram 1,3,40-41] who was the ruler of Ayodhya, can be called as the Viratpurusha. It is said in the story itself that they were four bodies and one soul, which underlines the concept that they are different forms of the same spirit, Paramatman.

Sita, the daughter of Earth, signifies "Prakriti" itself. The absolute Brahman when appears as a human being, it needs a body to reside. Here Rama, the Absolute Brahman is first seen in Ayodhya (The land were there is no yuddha or struggle) in the starting of the story. The time when Rama marries Sita, that is when Brahman appear to be in a body or Prakriti, he had to go to the forest which shows the major concept of monism;

That is whenever one misconceives the Supreme spirit in the mortal human body, there arises the doubt of duality, which is the cause of fear, the root of all problems in the worldly life, which is depicted in Ramayana in the form of a forest.

Rama is really embodied as Brahman, which is evident in the words:

The ogre king Ravana stands as a symbol of mind or senses.

When the body is caught in the hands of mind or senses, Rama, the absolute spirit interferes, and with the help of Hanuman, the embodiment of true intellect, vanquishes the Dasanana.

The ten heads of Ravan are minds us the ten levels of mind, which is referred to in Brihadaranyakopanishad;

Rama’s army of monkeys crosses the sea through the long bridge named Sethu, this bridge represents the path of true knowledge (Jnanamarga), the only way through which one can cross the sea of this life of struggle (samsara sagara). There arises a question how would Hanuman crossed the big ocean?, Yes, there must have another way, it is nothing but the path of Bhakti (bhakti marga), Hanuman opens his heart and shows Rama and Sita dwelling over there. Smriti says that;

At last defeating Ravana, Rama returns to Ayodhya, the land of peace.

According to Advaita philosophy, in the quest of truth,
attaining liberation (moksha), first one should make his mind or senses under control, second at a peaceful mind one should hear, see and contemplate on the absolute Brahman

आत्मावाङ्गरङ्गत्वः।श्रोत्योमन्त्।श्योदिश्यःसितः।: [रा. 4/5/6]

One must know the difference between the eternal and the temporal (नित्यानित्यवस्थावेकः).

For in the story, afterwards Rama loses Sita, here the question of purity arises. The ignorant intellect of men doubts that, body or prakriti being material, how can be an abode of the supreme spirit, which is pure, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Then the answer is that the Brahman, is not at all affected by the material body which appears to be impure (अस्सकोहययः [रा. 4/3/15]), thus, for showing the ignorant people the difference between the material world and the absolute Brahman, Rama loses Sita.

But really Sita is always there in the mind of Rama even when he loses her and Sita also respects Rama, this exemplifies the sruti;

एकोदेवः।सवभूतेषु।गूढः।सवयापी।सवभूतातरा।मा कमः।सवभूता।धवासः।सा।चेताके।वलोः।नगुण।4च [रा. 6/11]

Sita goes to the netherworld (rasatala), which symbolises death, the end of life, after which the body is becoming decayed into the earth, from where it came. This also shows the momentary nature of life in the world. Dr. Radhakrishnan has already pointed out that, in Ramayana, Valmiki is correlating the common worldly affairs with the eternal truth [Ra. Sa.p43].

The following verses of Ramayana seen in significant instances like 'vibheeshanasaranagati' and 'Jatayumoksha' eloquently indicate or underline the concept of 'Moksha' of Advaita.

 Philosophy has always been the guiding force of literature. Ramayana, the first literary composition on earth, itself proves the statement, which is evidently depicting the essence of Advaita Vedanta simply through the story of Rama. The characters in Ramayana signify the different elements of monistic philosophy. It illustrates the cycle of birth and death. Sita symbolises earth or body, since she originates and dissipates to earth. Rama stands for the Supreme Soul, the independent and unaffected.

REFERENCES


