



## Sri Rama as Maryada purushottama

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The Ramayana is a Sanskrit epic poem ascribed to the Hindu sage and Sanskrit poet Valmiki. Valmiki is a contemporary of Rama and a peripheral actor in the drama. The story's original version in Sanskrit is known as *Valmiki Ramayana*. It is regarded as one of the two great works of Indian Literature, along with Mahabharata. The Ramayana also plays an important role in Hindu Literature (Smṛti). It depicts the duties of relationships, portraying ideal characters like the ideal father, the ideal servant, ideal brother, ideal friend, ideal wife and the ideal king. The name Ramayana is a tatpurusha compound of Ram and ayana (going, advancing) which means 'Rama's journey'. Thematically, the Ramayana explores human values and the concept of dharma. The Ramayana consists of 24000 verses in seven books (kandas) and 500 cantos (sargas) and tells the story of Rama (the seventh avatar of the Hindu supreme-god Vishnu), whose wife Sita is abducted by Ravana, the king of Lanka. Srimad Valmiki Ramayana narrates the journey of Virtue to annihilate vice. Incidentally the first letter of every 1000 verses (total 24) make the Gayatri mantra. Verses in the *Ramayana* are written in a complex 32-syllable meter called *anuṣṭubh*. These verses are grouped into individual chapters called *Sargas*, wherein a specific event or intent is told. These chapters or *sargas* are grouped into books called *Kandas* where *Kanda* means the inter-node stem of sugar cane, or also a particular phase of the story or an event

in the course of story telling. The *Ramayana* was an important influence on later Sanskrit poetry and Hindu life and culture. Like the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* is not just a story. It presents the teachings of ancient Hindu sages in narrative allegory, interspersing philosophical and devotional elements.

The structure of *Srimad Valmiki Ramayana* is arranged into six *Kandas* or Books, and they are:

1. Bala Kanda (Book of Youth) [77 chapters]
2. Ayodhya Kanda (Book of Ayodhya) [119 chapters]
3. Aranya Kanda (Book of Forest) [75 chapters]
4. Kishkindha Kanda (The Empire of Holy Monkeys) [67 chapters]
5. Sundara Kanda (Book of Beauty) [68 chapters]
6. Yuddha Kanda (Book of War) [128 chapters]

Divine sage Narada arrives at the hermitage of Sage Valmiki in order to enlighten him and keep him informed of his duty to author the epic poem Ramayana. In the dialogue between these two sages, Valmiki elicits from Narada about the most virtuous person on earth, namely Rama. In this opening chapter, while eulogizing Rama Narada gives an outline of Ramayana, truly highlighting those aspects that are the keynotes in this epic, like virtuosity, generosity, morality, chastity and the like. Valmiki's thinking aloud, about the qualities of his



prospective hero of this epic, reflect in these lines addressed to Sage Naarada.

कः नु अस्मिन् सांप्रतम् लोके गुणवान् कः च वीर्यवान् |

धर्मज्ञः च कृतज्ञः च सत्य वाक्यो धृढ व्रतः || १-१-२

"Who really is that person in this present world, who is principled and also a potential one, a conscientious one, a redeemer, and also a truth-teller and self-determined in his deed... [1-1-2]

एतत् इच्छामि अहम् श्रोतुम् परम् कौतूहलम् हि मे |

महर्षे त्वम् समर्थोऽसि ज्ञातुम् एवम् विधम् नरम् || १-१-५

"All this I wish to listen from you, oh! Great Sage, as you are a mastermind to know this kind of man, and indeed my inquisitiveness is immense...". [1-1-5]. Thus Valmiki wanted to know about a human being with godly attributes. And Naarada tells Valmiki about Rama's great qualities in the later slokas.

बहवो दुर्लभाः च एव ये त्वया कीर्तिता गुणाः |

मुने वक्ष्यामि अहम् बुद्ध्वा तैः उक्तः श्रूयताम् नरः || १-१-७

"Oh! Sage Valmiki, the merits which you have extolled are many, and unattainable even for great emperors, let alone ordinary humans, and also infinite are they... but, about such a man with such merits I will speak on... for I, having known from Brahma of such a man, will make clear about that man..." [1-1-7]

इक्ष्वाकु वंश प्रभवो रामो नाम जनैः श्रुतः |

नियत आत्मा महावीर्यो द्युतिमान् धृतिमान् वशी || १-१-८

"One emerged from Ikshvaku dynasty and known to people as Rama by his name, and he is conscientious, highly valourous, resplendent, steadfast and a controller of vice and vile... and his own senses, as well... [1-1-8]

बुद्धिमान् नीतिमान् वाङ्मयी श्रीमान् शत्रु निर्बहणः |

विपुलांसो महाबाहुः कंबु ग्रीवो महाहनुः || १-१-९

"He is an adept one, moralist, learned, propitious, and a destroyer of enemies. His arms are lengthy, and his neck is like a conch-shell, and cheekbones high... [1-1-9]

महोरस्को महेष्वासो गृढ जत्रुः अरिन्दमः |

आजानु बाहुः सुशिराः सुललाटः सुविक्रमः || १-१-१०

"He is lion-chested, thick-shouldered, emperor's countenance is with a knee-length are his arms, and his is longbow, an enemy-subjugator, and his crowning-head with an ample forehead, and his pacing is lion-like... [1-1-10]

धर्मज्ञः सत्य सन्धः च प्रजानाम् च हिते रतः |

यशस्वी ज्ञान संपन्नः शुचिः वश्यः समाधिमान् || १-१-१२

"He is the knower of rectitude, bidden by the truth, also his concern is in the welfare of subjects, proficient in prudence, clean in his conduct, self-controlled and a diligent one, thus he is glorious... [1-1-12]

प्रजापति समः श्रीमान् धृता रिपु निषूदनः |

रक्षिता जीवलोकस्य धर्मस्य परि रक्षिता || १-१-१३



"He equals the Omniscient, he is an exalted one for he is the sustainer of all worlds, and he eliminates enemies

स च सर्व गुणोपेतः कौसल्य आनंद वर्धनः |

समुद्र इव गाम्भीर्यं धैर्येण हिमवान् इव || १-१-१७

"He who betters the happiness of his mother Kausalya is an embodiment of all noble merits, and in profundity he is like

विष्णुना सदृशो वीर्यं सोमवत् प्रिय दर्शनः |

काल अग्नि सदृशः क्रोधे क्षमया पृथ्वी समः || १-१-१८

धनदेन समः त्यागे सत्ये धर्म इव अपरः |

"In valour Rama is comparable with Vishnu, and in his looks he is attractive like full-moon, he equals the earth in his perseverance, but he is matchable with era-end-fire in his wrath... and in

वने तस्मिन् निवसता जनस्थान निवासिनाम् || १-१-४८

रक्षसाम् निहतानि असन् सहस्राणि चतुर् दश |

"During his stay in Dandaka forest Rama eliminated fourteen thousand demons in

इदम् पवित्रम् पापघ्नम् पुण्यम् वेदैः च संमितम् |

यः पठेत् राम चरितम् सर्व पापैः प्रमुच्यते || १-१-९८

"This Ramayana is holy, sin-eradicating, merit-endowing, and conformable with the teachings of all Vedas... and whoever reads this Legend of Rama, he will be verily liberated of all his sins... [1-1-98]

The characters Rama, Sita, Lakshman, Bharata, Hanuman and Ravana are all fundamental to the cultural consciousness of India, Nepal and many south-east Asian countries such as Thailand and Indonesia. There are other versions of the *Ramayana* in Indian languages, besides Buddhist and Jain adaptations; and also Cambodian, Indonesian, Filipino, Thai, Lao, Burmese, and Malaysian versions of the tale. Father Kamil Bulke, author of *Ramakatha*, has identified over 300 variants of *Ramayana*. There is an

completely, thus he is a guardian of all living beings and he guards probity, in its entirety... [1-1-13]

an unfathomable ocean, and by fortitude he is unalterable like the kingly Himalayan mountain... [1-1-17]

benevolence he is identical to Kubera, God of Wealth-Management, and in his candour he is like Dharma itself, the other God Probity on earth... [1-1-18, 19a]

all, who are the inhabitants of that very forest... [1-1-48b, 49a]

extensive tradition of oral storytelling based on the *Ramayana* in Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Vietnam and Maldives. The *Ramayana* became popular in southeast Asia during the 8th century and was represented in literature, temple architecture, dance and theatre. Today, dramatic enactments of the story of *Ramayana*, known as Ramlila, take place all across India and in many places across the globe within the Indian diaspora. According to Hindu tradition, Rama is an incarnation (*Avatar*) of the god Vishnu. The main purpose of this incarnation is to demonstrate the righteous path (*dharma*) for all living creatures on earth. Rama is the symbol of courtesy and virtue, a man of values and morals.



Lord Rama is considered to have taken birth on the earth to destroy the evil forces of the age. Lord Rama, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, is "the embodiment of truth, of morality, the ideal son, the ideal husband, and above all, the ideal king"

Shri Rama was a paragon of virtues. Rama was not only kind and affectionate but generous and considerate of feelings for all around him. Lord Rama had a marvelous physique and captivating manners. Shri Ram had a magnanimous personality. He was extremely noble, generous, chivalrous and fearless. He was very simple and absolutely free from flamboyance. Lord Rama is considered as a son unequalled in the world, and resembled Dasaratha in each and every aspect of good qualities. He never spoke a lie throughout his life. He always offered respect to the scholars and the elders, people loved him and he adored the people. He was eloquent, attractive and adjustable to circumstances. He knew the heart of each and every human being on the earth (being omniscient). He had all the conceivable qualities of a king's son and was dear to the people as their own hearts. Lord Rama was endowed with incredible transcendental qualities. To put succinctly, Sri Rama's life was a life of holy compliance, of stainless purity, of matchless simplicity, praiseworthy contentment, commendable self-sacrifice and remarkable renunciation.

Rama is referred to within Hinduism as Maryada Purushottama, literally the Perfect Man or Lord of Self-Control or Lord of Virtue. Rama is the husband of Sita, whom Hindus consider to be an avatar of Lakshmi and the embodiment of perfect womanhood. Rama's life and journey is one of perfect adherence to

dharma despite harsh tests of life and time. He is pictured as the ideal man and the perfect human. Lord Rama was the prince of the Ikshvaku race. He is the Prince of Ayodhya and is banished to a forest by his stepmother. For the sake of his father's honor, Rama abandons his claim to Kosala's throne to serve an exile of fourteen years in the forest. While in exile, his wife, Sita, is kidnapped by Ravana, King of the Rakshas on Lanka. After a long and arduous search that tests his personal strength and virtue, Rama fights a colossal war against Ravana's armies. In a war of powerful and magical beings, greatly destructive weaponry and battles, Rama slays Ravana in battle and liberates his wife. Having completed his exile, Rama returns to Ayodhya and eventually becomes emperor, rules with happiness, peace, prosperity and justice - a period known as Rama Rajya.

Rama was Lord Hari Himself incarnate on earth for the destruction of Ravana. He was well accomplished, beautiful and endowed with royal marks. His glory and prowess were unlimited. He was peerless on earth. He was free from malice. He was gentle and the protector of the people. He always addressed the people in gentle words. He never used any harsh words even when somebody provoked him. He had his sway over the whole world. He was virtuous and of manly strength. He was the Lord of the mind and the senses. Brave and valiant, he was yet gentle and modest. He was a sage in counsel, kind and sweet in speech, most courteous and handsome in appearance. Ever devoted to the good and prosperity of his kingdom and his subjects, he was a defender of the weak and the protector of Dharma. Deep and unfathomed like the ocean, firm and steadfast like the



Himalayan Mountains, valiant like Lord Vishnu, he was the joy of Kausalya. Though fierce like fire on the battle field, he was calm like the cool breeze of the Mandara hills, patient like Mother Earth and righteous like Dharma, the Lord of Justice himself. In the pains or griefs of his people, his heart swiftly sympathised with the sufferers, in the festive scenes which held them in joy, he, like a father, shared their joy. He was a Prema Murti, an image of love. He was an ideal son, an ideal brother, and an ideal husband, an ideal friend and an ideal king. He can be taken to embody all the highest ideals of man. He led an ideal life of householder to teach the tenets of righteousness to humanity. The noblest lesson embodied in the Ramayana is the supreme importance of righteousness in the life of every human being. Righteousness is the spiritual spark of life. Cultivation of righteousness is the process of the unfoldment of the latent divinity in man. The glorious incarnation of the Supreme Being, as Lord Rama, has exemplified through his own life, how to follow the path of righteousness. One must be imbued with a definite conviction about the supremacy of moral principles,

**रामो द्विर्नाभिभाषते**

**Ramo dwir naabhibhaashate**

### 2.18.30

Once Rama gives his word, that is final and it is kept at any cost. There is no question of repetition of the same a second time.

[Context: Rama's words to Kaikeyi : *tat broohi vachanam devi raajno yadabhikaangkshitam Karishye pratijaane cha ramo dwir naabhibhaashate* "O Devi! Please tell me what the King wants of me. I promise that I will carry out whatever is his wish.

ethical values and spiritual ideals, which should guide one's day to day actions and serve as powerful means for the culture of the human personality. That is the purpose of life. That is the way to Self realisation. That is the message and the mission of Lord Rama's life on earth.

Sri Rama, the hero of Valmiki's Ramayana, is an embodiment of every social and domestic virtue. He kicked off the throne and the pleasures of the senses and the world to fulfill the words of His father. If Rama would have longed for the throne, it was quite easy for Him to get it. He was very popular. He was the mightiest of heroes; He destroyed the Rakshasas and bent the tremendous bow of Lord Siva. But, He did not show any kind of resistance.. He gladly accepted what was dictated by the cruel and wicked Kaikeyi. Throne possessed less fascination for Him than the obedience to His father's behest. He kicked off the kingdom and the comforts of a king. He gladly accepted the exile. The laudable virtues of Sri Rama cannot be adequately described.

What Rama says once he carries out; there is no looking back."]

Sri Rama's life was a life of holy obedience, of stainless purity, of matchless simplicity, laudable contentment, commendable self-sacrifice, and remarkable renunciation. He paid equal respect to His mother and His step-mothers, and revered His Guru. He adhered to the injunctions of the Shastras. He led the life of an ideal householder to teach the world the Dharmas of a Grihastha. He never swerved an inch from truth and duty. His



adherence to duty was remarkable and illustrious. He even abandoned His wife who was His life, heart and soul to ensure the good of His subjects, and sacrificed His personal happiness. He was prepared to sacrifice His very life even to secure the contentment of His people and to stick to His duty. He lived for His people.

Rama was an ideal king. He ruled the kingdom in a wonderful way. He was just and righteous. He was courageous and kind. He was endowed with a gentle and generous disposition. He was civil and courteous. Therefore His subjects loved Him immensely. Not a single man was unhappy during His regime. He often used to say, "I will do anything and everything to please My subjects; and, if necessary, I can even abandon My dear wife for their sake." That is the reason why His reign was called "Rama Rajya." There were not dacoits during His regime. All led a virtuous life. Nobody spoke any untruth. Anybody could place a bag of gold or jewels even in the main street. No one would touch it even. Rama Rajya was based on truth. Dharma was its foundation. Shastras were the guiding principles. Rishis, Yogis, Munis and Brahma Jnanis were the guiding lights. The Vedas were respected and followed. Therefore, Rama Rajya endured and prospered. And it is even now spoken of as the most perfect form of government.

*Ramayana* assumes that there is a close relationship between the human and the divine. As an avatara, a god may even take on human form, even while maintaining some of his or her divine attributes. In the case of Rama, a human being might be even more powerful than a god in certain ways; Rama is said to possess virtues that even the gods lack,

**यो हि दत्त्वा द्विपश्रेष्ठं कक्ष्यायां कुरुते मनः ।**

and Rama has the ability to slay Ravana because the evil king has overlooked the power of humanity. This first book of the *Ramayana* demonstrates Rama's miraculous powers. Rama's miracles are not only martial (the defeat of the rakshasas), they are also demonstrations of strength and merit (the lifting of Siva's bow), and healing (the liberation of Ahalya). He is not only a great warrior but also a strong person who can punish the wrong doers and rescue the sufferers. In addition to this, he is good, kind, just, and in every way possesses every virtue. For many centuries, Rama has been an exemplar to the people of South Asia.

Book Two of the *Ramayana* emphasizes the importance of keeping one's word. Rama accepts the order to relinquish the throne to Bharata and go into exile, because refusing to do so would mean breaking his father's word. This would be a terrible thing, because it is the integrity of a king's word that makes him fit to rule. This incident also exemplifies Rama's unique and heroic character. He accepts this unfair turn of events with equanimity, calming his brother Lakshmana and his mother Kausalya when they urge him to resist this decision. Even though his parents grieve terribly, he does not stray from his duty. Though it may seem cold and cruel to the modern reader, Rama is actually being an exemplar of virtue because he does not let his personal sympathies get in the way of his duty, his dharma. It should also be noted that Rama's exile in the wilderness is not an idyllic pastoral situation. The jungle is full of dangerous animals and biting insects, and Rama is not allowed to take any supplies with him, save a single garment of tree bark and his weapons.



रज्जुस्नेहेन किं तस्य त्यजतः कुञ्जरोत्तमम् ॥ १

*Yo hi datwaa dwipashreshthham kakshyaayaam kurute manah  
Rajjusnehena kim tasya tyajatah kunjaroottamam*

2.37.3

If a person is gifting away his elephant but his heart is set on the rope used for tying the elephant, of what use is his attachment to the rope when he is giving away the elephant itself.

[Context: Dasaratha wanted to send the royal retinue to follow Rama to the forests. Kaikeyi objects to this. Rama says that when he is abandoning the kingdom itself what royal paraphernalia to him is. It is like giving away the

elephant and setting one's heart on the rope with which the elephant is tied.]

Rama is also not allowed to be near civilization, but instead must eke out an existence in the wild. This is a terrible situation to cope with for fourteen years, and Rama has a number of chances to return to Ayodhya and take on the much more comfortable duties of kingship. However, he refuses all these opportunities, explaining that it is his duty and his fate to serve out his time in the wilderness.

कुलीनमकुलीनं वा वीरं पुरुषमानिनं ।

चारित्र्यमेव व्याख्याति शुचिम् वा यदि वाऽशुचिम् ॥

*Kuleenam akuleenam vaa veeram purushamaaninam  
Charitrameva vyaakhyaati shuchim vaa yadi vaashuchim*

2.109.4

उद्विजन्ते यथा सर्पात् नरादनृत वादिनः

*Udwijante yathaa sarpaat naraadanruta vaadinah*

2.109.12

सत्यमेवेश्वरो लोके सत्ये धर्मः समाश्रितः

*Satyameveshwaro loke satye dharmah samaashritah*

2.109.13

Only a person's conduct and character proclaim whether he is born in a good family or whether he is boasting about himself or whether he is unblemished (*shuchih*) or blemished (*ashuchih*).

Just as people are afraid of serpents they are afraid of persons who utter lies.

Truth controls this world and *dharma* is rooted in truth.

[Context: These are words of Rama to Maharshi Jabali who advises him to ignore his father's wishes and go back to Ayodhya. The Maharshi speaks like a *nastika* and makes disparaging remarks about dharma, truth, good conduct, character etc. Rama, however, reiterates the values of truth, *dharma* and character in a man's life.]

लक्ष्मी चन्द्रादपेयाद्वा हिमवान् वा हिमं त्यजेत्

अतीयाद्सागरो वलां न प्रतिज्ञामहं पितुः

*Lakshmee chandrat apeyaadwaa himavaan vaa himam tyajet  
Ateeyaad saagaro velaam na pratijnaamaham pituh*

2.112.18



Beauty may leave the moon, Himavaan may become bereft of snow, the ocean may transgress its shores but I will never violate the promise given by my father.

[Context: Rama's words to Bharata when he requests him to return to Ayodhya and rule the Kingdom.]

Rama's killing of the vanara king Vali raise questions about the dharma of killing. The text suggests that the taintless Rama may be committing a sin by killing Vali through trickery. Vali pitifully asks Rama why he has felt the need to kill him, when the monkey king

**ज्येष्ठ भ्राता पिता वापि यश्च विद्यां प्रयच्छति ।**

**त्रयो वै पितरो ज्ञेयाः धर्मं च पथि वर्तिनः ॥**

***Jyeshthho bhraataa pitaa vaapi yashcha vidyaam prayachchhati***

***Trayo vai pitaro jneyaah dharme cha pathhi vartinah***

#### 4.18.13

One's elder brother, father and the teacher who gives knowledge – all these three, treading the path of *dharma*, are to be considered as one's father.

[Context: Rama is justifying his action in killing Vali from behind a tree. Vali, being the elder brother of Sugreeva should have been like a father to him. Instead, he had taken away Sugreeva's wife causing the latter mental agony.]

It is said that Rama performed diina jana rakshana in this Aranya Kaanda, Miserable People's Protection and mitra jana rakshana in the next canto Kishkindha Kaanda, i.e., Friendly People's Protection.

#### References:

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- Ramayana - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramayana>

has done nothing at all to harm him. Rama knows that this is an immoral act, but he does not want to break his promise to Sugriva. Rama explains to dying Vali as to why he gave such a punishment. Rama categorically explains all the question put by Vali in the last chapter from the viewpoint of scriptures that lay down principle for sanaatana dharma, eternal tradition, as well as raaja dharma, king's duty. Vali finally concludes that there is someone superior to him and thus seeks refuge in Rama.

The primary conflict in the book is between the cosmic forces of good (embodied by Rama and his allies), and the forces of evil (personified by Ravana). It is Rama's duty to restore dharma and balance to the world. The confrontation between Rama and Ravana is the resolution of the conflict between ultimate good and ultimate evil, as well as the final piece of Rama's long journey. The Ramayana proves that Sri Rama is a perfect as a man, as a king, as a son, as a husband, as a brother, as a friend. That is why he is called 'Maryada Purushottama'