

***RAMAYANA AS A BASIS FOR MORAL  
TRANSFORMATION IN SOCIETY***

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*Gira aratha jala bici sama kahiata bhinna na bhinna,*

*Bandaun Sita Rama pada jinhahi parama priya khinna.*

*I reverence the feet of Sita and Rama, who though stated to be different are yet  
identical just like a word and its meaning or like water and waves on its  
surface, and to whom the afflicted are most dear.*

*(Ramacaritamanasa, Balakanda: 18)*

DEDICATED TO

**SITA AND RAMA**

PARENTS OF THE UNIVERSE

MY MA AND DAD

MR & MRS T. SINGH

OF QUEENSBURGH, KWAZULU NATAL

WITH LOVE, DEDICATION AND GRATITUDE

Mangala karani kali mala harani Tulasi katha Raghunatha ki.

The tale of the Lord of Raghus, of Tulasidasa's, brings forth blessings and  
wipes away the impurities of the kali age.

( Ramacaritamanasa, Balakanda, 9, chanda:1)

(i)

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SUBJECT OF STUDY: The *Ramayana* as a basis for moral transformation in society

Society as a whole seems to be trapped in a syndrome where disregard for moral values is becoming the norm. We as members of society are simultaneously becoming oblivious to the absence of morality in human conduct. We tend to accept and promote this type of behaviour. This has been a slow, but ongoing process, as Radhakrishnan saw this almost fifty years ago and said:

*There is a startling relaxing of traditions, of restraints and of established law and order. Ideals until yesterday that were regarded as inseparable from social decency and justice, which were able to direct and discipline conduct for centuries are swept away. (Radhakrishnan; 1956: 10)*

The relaxation that Radhakrishnan spoke of has now enthroned itself in the very heart of society, sending its roots deep into every institution, as society functions as an aggregate of institutions. The basis is the institution of family, followed by education and law. These components of society require religious and moral guidelines to ensure a humane and harmonious civilisation on earth.

The family fails to instil morality amongst its members. The education system

is also failing in this, as we are living in an era where success is measured totally in terms of material accomplishments, at the willing compromise of morals. It is such instances that have resulted in the tragedy of the present society; where murders, rape, robberies, incest, child molestation and adultery are but some of the daily occurrences. The question arises, "Whither society?"

All societies and cultures have sources of high moral/ethical principles, yet the activities of individuals evince a total lack of moral values. I postulate that the proliferation of immoral acts is a result of compromise of morality in favour of expediency. This compromise stems directly from the neglect of culture, and the vehicle of any culture is the language of that community.

Language especially in minority situations attains a mystic and spiritual quality. Hence the study/promotion of the language would inculcate and fortify moral values. Literature and language of a people would wield a profound influence on social mores.

Society is in a state where there is a desperate need for transformation. A transformation that would alter the mindset of society, from a morality-neutral to an actively moral one. This must be initiated in the home, schools, workplace, and all human/social interactions. This can only be pursued through religion as advocated by Radhakrishnan in the following lines:

*Though our age has largely ceased to understand the meaning of religion, it is still in desperate need of that which religion alone can give. The recognition of a Transcendent Supreme, the freedom of the human individual as a manifestation of the Supreme and the unity of mankind as a goal of history are the foundations of major religions. (Radhakrishnan; 1956: 204)*

While all religions and cultures have emphasised virtuous conduct, the hypothesis of this study is that the *Ramayana*, either Valmiki's Sanskrit original, or Tulasidasa's Hindi version has all the necessary elements to ennoble society. The essence of Hinduism is encapsulated in the *Ramayana* as scripture, and as literature it is society-orientated and the writers of the *Ramayana* envisaged the betterment of society through their works. The *Ramayana*, *"is not only a literary treasure but also a source of ennobling influence on the relationships of men as parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, teachers and pupils and rulers and ruled."* (Raghavan; cited in Shukla, 2002: 14)

The *Ramayana* encompasses almost every facet of life, and sets forth ideals and its opposites in the most simplistic way. We have the mothers Kausalya and Sumitra as ideals, opposed to Kaikeyi. We have Dasaratha, who dies, as he is incapable of bearing the separation from his children, and we have Ravana who gets all his sons killed to fulfil his selfish desires. We have the ideal in Sita opposed by that of Surpanakha, Rama against Ravana, brothers like Bharata and his opposite Bali. Where the *Ramayana* presents to us *Ramarajya* (utopia), it also exposes us to *Ravanarajya* (anarchy). Thus one can see the best and worst of

every role and rule. Although a simple narrative, it interrogates issues from domestic and social harmony, harmonious governance to God realisation. There is a beneficial lesson to be learnt for just about everyone.

It is in the *Ramayana*, that we see through the example of the heroic characters that morality / *dharma* is beyond compromise, and it is only in the observance of *dharma* that one can attain true happiness and harmony. This perfect state of being was a reality in *Ramarajya*, and to date remains the only documented era in the history of man to have displayed such a perfect society.

## 1.2 Scope

The *Ramayana* has become part of the spiritual life of many Hindus throughout the world. It has influenced the entire Hindu ethos, and has survived for generations solely through the oral tradition. South African Hindus are no different. A common and the most popular festival amongst South African Hindus is undoubtedly Diwali, and with it comes the story of the *Ramayana*. Although this may be so, mostly Hindi subjects would be approached within the scope of this study. The reason for this is that part of this study intends to analyse language as a vehicle of culture.

### **1.3 Aims**

This study aims to describe the high standing moral ideals as depicted in the *Ramayana* across various institutions, and to compare those moral standards to contemporary ones, which would necessitate the assessment of present society with regard to morality, which would form the first part of this study.

It then intends to look at possible reasons for the neglect of morality, and also intends to briefly analyse language as a vehicle of culture and its role in promoting ideals from the *Ramayana*.

Lastly the general relevance and applicability of the *Ramayana* as a basis for moral transformation will be assessed.

### **1.4 Research Methodology**

Being a member of the socio-cultural group of which the *Ramayana* is part, has accorded me the opportunity of being exposed to the Rama Story from a very early age, through the very effective oral tradition. This however was a very simple understanding of the narrative, neglecting its moral implications. It was only when I undertook the study of Hindi at tertiary and post-graduate studies that I had first hand contact with the narrative, and became aware of the moral, philosophical and spiritual implications of the text, which is significantly different to contemporary society.

This study will include empirical research by means of questionnaires, interviews, observation and participation. Religio-cultural foundations and organisations as well as individuals will be included. As part of this study describes life of the past, *Treta Yuga*, especially with regard to its moral climate and compares it to contemporary society Historical-Comparative Research was employed.

#### **1.4.1 Theoretical framework**

The Religio-cultural theoretical framework will inform this research project. The *Ramayana* as a major religious work wields tremendous influence on various aspects of society, amongst which morality is of vital importance. Hence the religio-cultural theory is most appropriate. Toulis, 1997: 214, the leading proponent of this theory, asserted that religion remains a prominent feature of peoples' lives, and it is crucial to an understanding of the identity of the adherents.

Hulmes (1989) aptly remarked that education can be structured to incorporate different cultures without destroying their distinctive qualities. Hulmes further asserted that values of religion and culture can be the keys to social cohesion. Referring to religion as a "*great central unifying force of culture*," Hulmes describes religion as the guardian of tradition, the preserver of moral law and the educator and teacher of wisdom.



This theoretical approach can be successfully applied to the Historical-Comparative Research methodology, particularly since *Bhakti* or devotion forms an integral part of the theory as well as the message of the *Ramayana*.

#### 1.4.2 Historical-Comparative Research

The Historical-Comparative Research is a research method structure that allows a researcher to explore issues across different historic periods. Comparisons enrich thinking and add to the very fibre of research. Swanson effectively describes the strengths of comparisons as, “ *thinking without comparisons is unthinkable. And, in the absence of comparisons, so is all scientific thought and all scientific research. No one should be surprised that comparisons, implicit or explicit, pervade the work of social scientists and have done so from the beginning.*” (Swanson; cited in Neuman, 1997: 381)

Historical-Comparative Research was an extremely appropriate research tool to be employed for this research, as this research interrogates the issue of morality of society across two time periods, that is the time of the *Ramayana*, *Treta Yuga*, and contemporary society. The deterioration of the moral fibre of society is prevalent throughout modern history, thus to locate an ideal in moral climate in recent times is almost an impossible venture. The *Ramayana*, however, provides a detailed description of a society that lives life’s trials and rewards through constant contemplation of *dharma*/morality. There is a significant

distinction between those that observe *dharma* to those that transgress *dharma*. Comparing contemporary society with that of the *Ramayana* would inform individuals of the immense amount of neglect that exists in present day society with regard to morality, also it would set forth an ideal with regard to morality of a society.

Research questions that are regarded appropriate for Historical-Comparative Research are those that address major societal change, fundamental common features of most societies, and why present social arrangements take a certain form in certain societies. (*Neuman; 1997: 383*) This research looks at morality over two different eras, and attempts to provide explanations for this change, and it also looks at institutions that are common to these two societies and discusses the changes that have occurred. Thus Historical-Comparative Research is an appropriate research type to suit this study.

Historical-Comparative Research warrants a particular process, namely:

- Conceptualising the object – this was done in formulating the research proposal.
- Locating evidence – locating evidence was done via a thorough study of the *Ramayana*, media articles and data collection through questionnaires, interviews and observer participation.
- Synthesising – this was done through the interpretation and analysis of data.
- Writing of a report – the writing of this dissertation completes this process.

### 1.4.3 Data collection techniques

Information in this research was collected through a thorough literature review, analysis and critique of media articles with regard to the present status of morality in society, through questionnaires and interviews, and observer participation.

#### 1.4.3.1 Literature Review

The literature review of this study was initiated by a thorough reading of the *Ramacaritamansa* and *Srimada Ramayana*, in order to understand the moral atmosphere of the time portrayed.

A literature survey of some of the many works on the *Ramayana* was conducted as vast literature exists on many aspects of the *Ramayana*. There lies a multitude of literature on Tulasidasa's *Ramayana* alone, aside from all the other variations. Tulasidasa has been said to have, "*left a legacy which has proved inspiring and exhilarating to successive generations.*" (Saksena, undated, cited in *Sri Ramacaritamanasa*, 721) This is certainly one of the reasons as to why there lies an abundance of literature on the subject.

It was also important to use this knowledge to provide a detailed explanation of the moral climate of the *Ramayana* in this dissertation, for readers to truly understand the *Ramayana's* views on morality across various situations, which has been done in Chapter Four of this study. This is an integral part of this study

and the research method, as Historical-Comparative Research has often been described as difficult to read. This is due to the fact that the issue/s of a historic period that are being researched may not be familiar with the reader, as expressed by Neuman, *"Readers who are familiar with only their own cultures or contemporary times will find it difficult to understand Historical-Comparative studies."*(Neuman; 1997: 384) In providing a complete chapter in this study that contains details of morality during the time of Ramayana, an attempt was made to alleviate this problem.

#### **1.4.3.2 Interrogation of present society with regard to its moral stance**

Since this study compares the status of morality in the period of the *Ramayana* with the present status of morality in society, many newspaper articles were used that revealed moral degeneration. This was supplemented with the incorporation of questions on the present status of morality in interviews and questionnaires.

#### **1.4.3.3 Questionnaires and Interviews**

The best way to ascertain views of individuals is by interacting with them. In a research study one can accomplish this interaction through the use of questionnaires or interviews. One has to consider, *"In evaluating data collection technique used for the survey, no method can be taken as being the best, although personal interviews enjoys maximum advantage to other methods. The*

*method therefore selected also depends on the research project undertaken.”(Pillay; 2000: 333-334)* Since a large part of this research study focussed on an individual’s understanding of scripture, the *Ramayana*, and its implications to morality which is pretty much neglected, personal interviews would have created feelings of intimidation to divulge what one is ignorant about. Questionnaires can interrogate the same issues without intimidating the respondent, as it allows for the respondent to remain anonymous. Thus the interview schedule and questionnaires carried the same questions.

It is of absolute importance that the questions used in such mediums of interaction are abundantly clear and relevant to the research topic, and this can only be achieved through intense contemplative design strategies.

#### **1.4.3.3.1 Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire was divided into three sections including questions of a quantitative and qualitative nature, as per research demands. Below is a table revealing some of the differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research:

<i>Quantitative</i>	<i>Qualitative</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Data is in the form of numbers from precise measurement.</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Procedures are standard and replication is assumed.</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables, or charts and discussing how what they show relates to the hypotheses.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Data is in the form of words from documents, observations and transcripts.</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Research procedures are particular, and replication is rare.</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalizations from evidence and organizing data to present a coherent, consistent picture.</i></li> </ul>

*(Adapted from Neuman; 1997: 329)*

Each section of the questionnaire focused on different issues. Section A was purely quantitative in nature, where respondents had to merely tick the appropriate block. This section consisted of ten questions, dealing with age, occupation, sex, marital status, knowledge of Hindi, qualification in Hindi and institution at which obtained. It also dealt with the religious group one belongs to within Hinduism, and the religious body/organisation that one belongs to and the status of the *Ramayana* and Rama Worship holds in that particular organisation. (Appendix A)

Section B dealt with the respondents' knowledge of the *Ramayana* and its moral implications. This section consisted of 15 questions most of which were

qualitative in nature. (*Appendix A*)

Section C consisted of thirteen questions of a qualitative nature and dealt with the status of morality in contemporary society, the *Ramayana's* stance on certain moral issues, what can be done to remedy society's moral degeneration and the potential of the *Ramayana* to meet this need.

#### **1.4.3.4 Observation and participation**

*Ramayana* recitals, at various *Ramayana Mundalees*, and celebrations of festivals pertaining to the *Ramayana*, and occasions celebrating personalities of the *Ramayana*, such as *Ramayana* week, *Rama Naumi*, and *Hanuman Jayanti* were attended to observe proceedings and to ascertain whether moral issues are being interrogated at such platforms.

It was to my advantage that I attended the International *Ramayana* Conference, which was held in South Africa in 2002, which afforded me an opportunity to view the impact of the *Ramayana* on people from different parts of the world, and to listen to esteemed scholars of the *Ramayana*.

#### **1.4.4 Sampling and administering of questionnaires**

Sampling is a process that allows a researcher to work with a small unit of a population or society and form relatively accurate generalisations of that part of the population or society being researched. To ensure that this statement holds

true, one has to select a sampling type that suits their research aims, sometimes a combination of sampling types may be necessary.

Sampling processes can be broadly classified into two distinct types, i.e. Probability Sampling and Nonprobability Sampling. Each has specialised sampling types within them.

Below is a table briefly describing sampling types.

Types of Sample	
<u>Nonprobability</u>	<u>Probability</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Haphazard:</b> Select anyone who is convenient.</li> <li>• <b>Quota:</b> Select anyone in a predetermined group.</li> <li>• <b>Purposive:</b> Select anyone in a hard-to-find target population.</li> <li>• <b>Snowball:</b> Select people connected to one another.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Simple:</b> Select people based on a true random procedure.</li> <li>• <b>Systematic:</b> Select every kth person.</li> <li>• <b>Stratified:</b> Randomly selects people in predetermined groups.</li> <li>• <b>Cluster:</b> Take multistage random samples in each of several levels.</li> </ul>

(Neuman; 1997: 205)

Before a researcher settles on a sampling type he/she needs to address the issue of a target group in the research. A target group are those that are directly linked to the research topic and its aims. The target group of this research study is



mostly Hindi subjects who belong to the Hindu religion.

Because of the cosmopolitan society this research study is set in, it is hard to simply access people in the target group. Also accessing individuals in the target group does not necessarily mean that they would be willing to be part of this study. This was a reality that was faced during the administering of questioners, and even finding individuals willing to avail themselves for interviews.

Initially an effective strategy of locating such subjects would be from Hindi Hindu-Organisations. This however would have been a flawed sample, as it would leave out all Hindi Hindus that do not attend such organisations. In an effort to accord more authenticity to the research two sampling methods were employed. The sampling types that were employed in this study were, Purposive Sampling and Snowball Sampling.

Purposive Sampling, as evinced in its name, locates samples, *“with a specific purpose in mind,”* (Neuman; 1997: 206) while Snowball Sampling functions as a process of acquiring leads from individuals willing to part take in the research study. Snowball Sampling functions as a form of referrals.

#### **1.4.4.1. Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were distributed to mostly Hindi speaking members of the community, on the Purposive and Snowball-Sampling basis. A covering letter was attached to all questionnaires, explaining the purpose of the questionnaire,

and informing those interacting with the questionnaire that there were no correct or incorrect answers, their response should be governed by what their perspective or understanding of an issue was. The bulk of the questionnaires were distributed in Durban and surrounding areas, with a few in Gauteng. An analysis of the questionnaires forms the bulk of chapter three, and part of chapter two.

It is important to mention that since the questionnaire and interview schedule carried the same questions, an option of an interview was offered to individuals where possible. However, most individuals opted for completing questionnaires. The reason for this may be due to the fact that a specific time did not have to be set aside for the questionnaire; it could be completed at an individual's convenience. An interview demands a specific time period, which many people do not have to spare in their rushed lives. The other reason may be attributed to the fact that in completing a questionnaire, one may remain anonymous.

#### **1.4.4.2 Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with persons familiar with the *Ramayana*, and such information is also included in the body of chapter three of this study and parts of chapter two. Interviews were conducted in the Durban and surrounding areas only.

#### 1.4.5 Some problems experienced

The greatest problem experienced was the unwillingness of members of the community to complete questionnaires. Many individuals, who could have made valuable input towards this research, would take the questionnaires and not return them. Many questionnaires were returned incomplete. Thus, they could not be used conclusively. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed, but only 88 were returned, of which only 77 were complete.

It was also problematic in trying to get people willing to talk about the *Ramayana*, thus a large portion of the interviews were conducted with members of different religious organisations more informally at *Ramayana* recitals.

In spite of the above mentioned problems those who willingly participated in this study, by completing questionnaires and availing themselves for interviews, minimised the negativity displayed by others, and made the overall interaction with this study very rewarding.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NEED FOR MORAL TRANSFORMATION IN SOCIETY

This chapter intends to look at the Hindu way of life as prescribed by the *Asramadharma* and how it features in the *Ramayana* and contemporary society. The problems that lie within the various institutions of contemporary society, as compared with the ideals set out in the *Ramayana* will be discussed. It also intends to adduce reasons for the state of apathy with regards to morality that exists in society.

#### 2.1 The *Asramadharma*

The *Asramadharma* may be very simply described as stages in one's life as per age and duty. There are four *asramas* (stages), namely: *Brahmacarya*, *Grhastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sannyasa*, and as mentioned earlier they all have distinct activities assigned to them.

##### 2.1.1 *Brahmacarya*

This is the first stage of life and involves the acquiring of knowledge. In this phase the sole duty of an individual is that of a student. This stage demands celibacy from those within it. On the completion of studies, one may move onto the next stage of life, which is the *Grhastha*. However if the student so wishes, he

could continue on a purely spiritual path, and bypass the *Grhastha* stage and move to the next stage.

### 2.1.2 *Grhastha*

This is a stage where an individual is allowed to marry, establish a family, and pursue material advancements. It is a stage where *Kama* or pleasure is pursued. One may argue that allowing such a stage in life would give rise to much evil, but this is not so. One has to remember that the fundamental rule of all Hindu principles is *dharma*. This would ensure that an individual may enjoy material and sensual pleasures only if they are *dharmic*, only if these pleasures are attained morally. It is important to remember that the other principle to ensure that one abides by righteousness is *karma* as explained in the following lines:

*The Hindu is always subject to the laws of karma and dharma and that these two concepts ideally prevent the pursuit of the kind of pleasure which would be against social and cosmic norms. (Fowler, 1997: 27)*

A very important facet of this stage is the rearing of a family. An individual has the religious and social obligation of raising a family in accordance with *dharma*. Once the responsibilities of family life are accomplished, then an individual may move to the next stage, the *Vanaprastha*.

### **2.1.3 *Vanaprastha***

In this stage, one is expected to give up all pleasures and focus on developing spirituality. Here again one is required to enter a state of celibacy. This stage also meant retreating to a forest, as a forest hermit in order to lead a more spiritual life. When spirituality is well developed, one would move to the next stage, the stage of *Sannyasa*.

### **2.1.4 *Sannyasa***

This stage may be adequately described as a stage of renunciation. The only goal that the individual should have, is the merging with God, or attaining moksha, release from the cycle of birth and death.

## **2.2. Present status of the *Asramadharma***

The third and fourth stages of the *Asramadharma* are almost obsolete, and the *Grhastha* stage normally lasts a lifetime. The first stage of *Brahmacarya* too, no longer functions as it used to.

Hindus have moved so far away from the prescribed norms of their religion that the *Asramadharma* appears to be rather impractical. This can be explained by looking at the financial obligations that one may have. In the present economic climate one engages in enterprises in order to pay towards one's financial

obligations. A large part of one's working life goes towards settling debts and one would only enjoy financial freedom, if at all, after retirement, thus to renounce one's wealth at this stage seems very impractical, if not undesirable.

The other reason that the last two *asramas* may have become almost extinct may certainly be attributed to the evils of this age. The forest may have been the hub of ascetics, but this is not so at present. We live in a period where safety is threatened daily in our own homes, let alone a forest. Forests, too, which were sanctuaries for all forms of life, are being destroyed to satisfy man's needs and greed.

Another very obvious reason is that as humans, we are too emotionally attached; the establishment of this *asrama* is to break attachment. The initial severing of ties is almost impossible. These sentiments are also prevalent in *Ramayana* (to be discussed later in this chapter).

This however does not mean that the ultimate goal of a Hindu should be anything but the attainment of *moksha*.

### **2.3. The *Asramas* and the *Ramayana***

It is interesting to note that of the four *asramas*, the first two can be easily and frequently identified in the *Ramayana*. This may be attributed to the fact that the great saints who documented the *Ramayana* had tremendous foresight, and knew

the proclivities of humankind. They probably realised that man may not venture beyond the *Grhastha asrama*, and thus placed an emphasis on the first two *asramas*, ensuring that if one were not to progress beyond the second *asrama*, at least one would adhere to the rules of the first two *asramas*. Success in the Hindu perception certainly goes beyond materialism, which prioritises spirituality.

### 2.3.1 The *Brahmacarya Asrama* in the *Ramayana*

Although there is not much mention of Rama during his *Bramacarya* stage in the *Ramayana*, the aspects of this *Asrama* are predominantly visible. We see Rama leave the luxuries of the palace and move to the *asrama* or hermitage of Vasishtha in order to undertake His studies, and later when Rama and Lakshmana voluntarily become students of Viswamitra.

Rama and his brothers' lives are filled with respect for the Guru, clearly revealing the impact of a well-managed education system. The educator, Guru, was of a saintly nature and concerned himself with the welfare of the student. The student in return paid the Guru with increasing reverence. The status of the guru was equated to that of God, and it was only through the reverence to the Guru that the student earned spiritual merit.

The *Brahmacarya* stage was successful in the period of the *Ramayana*, as there was an abundance of meritorious students and educators. It has been said, "No



*spoken word or written plea can teach young hearts what they should be, not all the books on all the shelves can, but what the teachers are themselves."*

*(Arther Guiteman: Inspirational cards)*

In the *Ramayana* the *Brahmacarya asrama* was a period in life where education was the primary concern of the student and there is no mention, or sign of a student breaking the rules of this stage. This compliance brought incredible credit to this stage of life, and to society as a whole for ensuring the proper nurturing of its children.

### **2.3.2 The *Grhastha Asrama* in the *Ramayana***

The institution of family is elaborately depicted in the *Ramayana*, clearly revealing the importance and effort required to make the *Grhastha Asrama* a harmonious and spiritual one. Family is always put first in the narrative of the *Ramayana*, and it is the positive and negative actions of the family members that move the narrative, and set forth the most potent lessons for society (to be discussed in chapter four).

Another important point worthy of mention is that the severing of bonds is not depicted unrealistically. It is not easy for one to break ties with those one loves and move on. This can be repeatedly discerned in the *Ramayana*, and makes the lessons more potent.

King Dasaratha, although willing to hand over the reigns of power to Rama, is incapable of surviving the separation from Rama. A sentiment almost all parents share, that is attachment to progeny, emerges as a powerful agent of human suffering.

Janaka, who was renowned for his renunciation and termed *Videha* (Bodiless), was reduced to tears when Sita was married and departing for Ayodhya. Such human emotions persist to this day, and are typical of the human condition.

The other very pertinent example is that of Vibhishana leaving Lanka. Vibhishana can be easily seen as the *Grhasthi*, breaking ties in order to reach God, in this case surrendering to Sri Rama. Although a greater reality lies in the refuge of Rama than mundane existence, Vibhishana finds it very difficult to abandon his brother Ravana and Lanka and only when he is physically kicked out of Lanka by Ravana that he departs.

The turmoil experienced by such saintly figures at the onset of separation in a period when righteousness was constantly maintained, mitigates the manifestation of similar traits in our era. It is also very important to note that the upheavals characterising the foregoing situations were governed by pure love for family members and not material aspects.

## 2.4 The present status of morality in society

The history of Hinduism is replete with descriptions of evil as it existed through the different ages, but the present age seems to be the climactic stage of such evil. Shukla (unpublished) opines that the prevalence of evil was very limited in *Tretayuga*, where evil was restricted to a particular place and a particular group, that is *Rakshasas* in Lanka. All the evil activities that destabilised the lives of man were mobilised by Ravana. The next *Yuga*, *Dwapara*, saw the entry of evil into family as in Kamsa, and the Kauravas. *Dharma* was restored in each of these two *Yugas*, by the manifestation of Sri Ram and Sri Krishna respectively. The present *Yuga*, that is *Kaliyuga* shows evil at its peak, since it is found in every individual, thus crippling the moral fibre of society. *Kaliyuga* has become so depraved that *"If the Lord has to manifest Himself now, He might have to annihilate almost all of the human race to restore dharma on earth."* (Shukla, unpublished) This can be deduced from the daily occurrences of depraved actions in human society, at all levels of public and private life.

It can be declared without any doubt that society is in urgent need for moral transformation. Every facet of contemporary society is plagued by depressing realities of our modern world, where righteousness seems to be a word of the distant past, as our world is overwhelmed with so much of immoral acts. Evil has found germination grounds in the very mind of man, and seems to be taking over his very existence, in all human spheres of relationships, activities and

endeavours.

#### **2.4.1 Problems that face marriage**

The Hindu institution of marriage falls within the parameters of religious duties, the *Grhastha Asrama*. This authenticates the sacredness of the institution of marriage. Marriage forms the basis of family, thus if a marriage is jeopardised it impacts directly on family life. It is reassuring to note that all religions honour the institution of marriage. But the reality is that many individuals do not honour their commitment to this institution, and in many instances, bring great discredit to the institution of marriage through their immoral actions, such as infidelity and abuse. The marriage vows are no longer sacred!

##### **2.4.1.1 Infidelity**

The institution of marriage can only retain its due status of respect through spouses remaining faithful to each other. However, one of the most prevalent infirmities that threaten the continued existence of marriage is infidelity.

Marriages should go beyond sensual pleasures. Sexual activity outside the marriage bond is threatening the sanctity of family life but it is disappointing to note that many people do not see this. Newspapers regularly publish accounts of extramarital sexual liaisons. Such an article appeared in the *Post Weekly*, November 5-7, 2001: 1.

The writer speaks of Indian males, who form the majority of males who frequent the help desks with regard to their HIV status, confessing to having extramarital affairs and frequenting sex workers for sexual gratification as they find their wives unattractive (*Post Weekly, November 5-7, 2001,1*). If physical attraction is the only aspect that should keep couples from straying from the path of fidelity, then the prevailing morality of this age becomes frightening, and frustrating. Hindus have a God like Sri Rama, who lived his entire life true to his *ekanari vrat* (vow to monogamy), which society should be emulating, instead of pandering to the base instincts.

The greater difficulty arises when one engages in sexual activity outside the marital home even when aware of the dangers of disease and the possibility of families breaking up. An aggravating factor is that such acts are discussed with a tone of sympathy towards those that stray from their marriages as evinced in an article that appeared in a local newspaper, *The Sunday Tribune, Herald, November 11, 2001: 1*. The Article reports reasons for infidelity of the Indian male sympathetically. The article has a purely physical bias and makes no mention of the sacredness of marriage, and how damaging such acts are especially to the spouse and family. Where such aberrations should be condemned, they are condoned by journalists who trivialise the enormity of such promiscuous acts.

Sitaram very aptly says of immoral sexual conduct and its effects:

*Promiscuous behaviour poses several types of threats, the worst being the death of large numbers of earth's inhabitants through incurable diseases. Immoral sexual conduct between consenting people is yet another problem to society, which leads to patterns of unbridled self-indulgence, crimes of passion and breaking up of families. In a society where these types of sexual activities preponderate, no scope remains for moral or social development. (Sitaram, 2001: 12)*

The AIDS pandemic, which is creating havoc throughout the world, is a direct result of promiscuity. Although the disease may be contacted in many ways, research has revealed that sexual intercourse is the most dominant. (*A pamphlet on HIV/AIDS, Department of Health, KZN*) AIDS which is decimating society, is a direct result of promiscuity, which in turn is a direct result of moral decay. The Hindu community is not safe from this as *"the number of Indians infected by the disease is on the rise."* (*The Rising Sun, May 7-13, 2002: 1*)

Such statistics reveal that sexual restraint which is prescribed in the *Ramayana* and other religious texts is now very neglected. This seems to portend the destruction of our humanity. It is the actions of humans that ravage society and point it in a downward path. The AIDS pandemic may very well be divine intervention, to bring about sexual restraint and decorum, but the unfortunate reality is that humans in their folly still seem to ignore this. Radhakrishnan very aptly says of the nature of humans:

*(The) Human race may perish by its own deliberate acts, by the stupidity and selfishness which are strongly enthroned in human nature. (Radhkrishnan, 1956: 10)*

Jayshankar Prasad describes a similar morally decayed, promiscuous lifestyle of the *Devajati* in his *Kamayani*. The *Devajati* was immersed in lust, and pursued sensual gratification only, without restraint or decorum. Prasad explains their excesses thus:

*Usi vasana ki upasana,  
Prakriti rahi durjeya, parajita  
huma saba the bhule mada men;  
bhole the, han tairte keval  
ab vilasita ke nada men.  
It was that focus on lust, where nature was defeated. We in  
our arrogance and ignorance only swam in  
lust.(CintaSarga)*

It is such behaviour that caused the destruction of the *Deva Jati* through the *Maha Pralay* (Great Deluge), and the entire race was destroyed with the exception of Manu. The promiscuous behaviour which was the result of the lascivious life style of the *devajati*, made the Creator assume the role of Destroyer. The magnitude of the wrong in following an immoral life can be seen in such a text clearly. Although God is portrayed as very compassionate, this text shows that such acts cannot be condoned by the Divine, and warns of the calamity that would eventually follow those that live such lives. The *devas* thought they were all powerful, thus abusing natural laws as well as morality. Today's humanity is doing the same, for similar reasons, as well as the desire to indulge only in pleasure without penance.

Marriage is wonderfully defined in Hinduism through the *Ardhangini* concept, meaning that a married couple constitutes two halves of one whole. This is depicted in the *Sivasakti* form wherein half the deity is Siva and the other half Sakti. This concept of marriage can only become a reality if faithfulness, love, trust and respect are lived in the relationship. Lack of marital fidelity and abuse are becoming common features that threaten the institution of marriage.

#### **2.4.1.2. Abuse of spouses**

There has been an alarming increase in spouse abuse which manifest very often as domestic violence. Many support organisations have been set up to offer support to such victims. One such organisation which deals with domestic violence, disclosed in its annual report, that it attends to an average of five to six complaints per week, with a total of 306 complaints for the year 2002. Although the generalised belief with regard to spouse abuse is that the victims are only women, this is not so. Although a minority, men are also abused. Of the mentioned 306, 42 were men. (*Domestic Violence Help Line, 3rd Annual Report, 2002: 2*)

The above-mentioned organisation works only in Phoenix, a large Indian suburb, and reveals statistics only reported to their organisation. There are quite a few organisations dealing with domestic violence, but this does not ensure that every victim of abuse would seek assistance, or even speak of it, and many



victims live through the abuse in silence. Thus one can see that such statistics are only a small part of the huge picture of the crisis that assails society. If abuse in marriages is not stopped, the end result could be very detrimental to those trapped in such marriages, which could end in bitterness, misery, separations, divorce or even suicide. The Ramayana ideal of relationships between spouses and families as shown below, no longer apply:

*Daihika daivika bhautika tapa, Ramarajya nahi kahuh  
byapa.  
Saba nara karahin paraspar priti, calahin swadharmanirata  
srutiriti.*

*Nowhere in Rama's realm could one find a person who  
suffered from any bodily pain, ill fortune or evil  
circumstances. All men and women loved one another, and  
conducted themselves in accordance with righteousness and  
were devoted to the injunctions of the Vedas. (Uttarakanda,  
20: 1)*

#### 2.4.1.3 Divorce

The Hindu community has always been perceived to be very conservative and orthodox, especially concerning divorce. The scriptures describe marriage as an indissoluble union of man and woman, extended into the next world. (*Manusmriti*) Divorce was very rarely heard of amongst the Hindu community. This, however, is no more the case.

As we consider the present status of marriage, Radhakrishnan's words come to mind:

*The dogma of the indissolubility of marriage is not final, yet it is ideal. (Radhakrishnan, 1956: 184)*

This statement clearly recognises that marriages may be dissolved on one or more very persuasive grounds. In cases where a person is trapped in an abusive relationship it may be the only alternative to continued abuse. However, by asserting that the indissolubility of marriage is ideal, Radhakrishnan clearly reveals the Hindu view on marriage, and that is it should ideally survive as long as the married couple survives. The ideology that marriage implies permanency, is one that is shared by many great authors, poets and scholars, in fact almost all societies aspire towards the permanency of marriage. This is well illustrated in the following:

*When we survey all known human societies, we find everywhere some form of family, some set of permanent arrangements by which males assist females in caring for children while they are young. No matter how free divorce, how frequently marriages break up, in most societies there is the assumption of permanent mating, the idea that the marriage should last as long as the both should live. (Mead, 1949: 188)*

One may wonder why marriage plays such a major role: the obvious, yet extremely significant reason for this is that a prosperous, harmonious and moral society is dependant on moral individuals, which would only be possible through morally healthy families, which is solely dependant on morally healthy marriages.

## 2.4.2 Problems that lie in family life

*The family is the cornerstone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitude, the hopes the ambitions, and values of the child. And when the family collapses, it is the children that are usually damaged. When it happens on a massive scale the community itself is crippled. (Johnson, 1965, cited in Stanton: 6)*

The above quotation reveals the all-important role family has to play in the healthy survival of society, to jeopardise family life would mean cutting the life source of society. Many contemporary families are burdened with diverse problems, such as divorce, separation, financial burdens, poverty, undisciplined children, weak parenting, radical youth, and cultural and spiritual ignorance. A few of these would be briefly discussed below.

### 2.4.2.1. Financial Burdens

The present economic climate and unemployment are very taxing on family life. The bare necessities are very difficult to acquire. This causes increased stress levels on the breadwinners of the family. To make financial survival possible, a dual income becomes a necessity. Thus, women have left the confines of their homes and entered the job market.

Gainful employment means parents have to be away from home for much of the day, thus leaving very little time to spend with their children. When parents get back from work, they are required to assist their children in their academic

work. Moral and spiritual education, prayer, and family bonding are neglected. Consequently the children of these families would grow up, spiritually deprived and culturally ignorant. Thus the life-styles, stresses and demands on the parents result in child neglect in many homes, especially where the nuclear family is the norm.

#### 2.4.2.2 Child neglect

Child neglect is defined as, *"negligence or inadequate care of children by adults, with regard to the physical, emotional, social and nutritional needs of the children."* (Kirstein, 2000, 3) Even if the basic needs of a child are met and at times when luxuries are even given, a child could still be exposed to neglect. In many homes child neglect takes place unknowingly. Many parents believe that by providing the necessities and luxuries their duties are complete, but it is the time and love that they give to their children that would remove neglect, and not material objects. Kirstein says, *"parents are too busy with their careers and social life so that they have no time to devote to the child."* (Kirstein, 2000: 54)

Thus these children would grow up emotionally damaged as the, *"family is the most human, the most powerful, and by far the most economical system known for keeping human beings human."* (Bronfenbrenner, cited in Stanton, 1995: 7)

Interestingly, in present circumstances, we find reasons to justify such neglect,

but when one looks at the *Ramayana*, it becomes evident children were appropriately nurtured. Amidst his kingly duties, Dasaratha is always concerned about his children, and shows a keen interest in all their activities, even when they become adults. (To be discussed in detail in Chapter four.)

#### **2.4.2.3 Child abuse and incest**

Child abuse is an evil that shatters the lives of many children. A child should be the concern of the entire society, as it is the children who are the future of society. The Honourable Graca Machel aptly says, “ *We must do anything and everything to protect children, to give them priority and a better future. This is a call to action and a call to embrace a new morality that puts children where they belong - at the heart of all agendas.*” (Cited in a pamphlet by Programme of Action for Children and Educators, 2002)

Human beings are distinguished as “rational”, yet this can be called into question: What kind of reasoning being would damage their own future, as that is exactly what humans do when they abuse children.

Abuse can take a multiplicity of forms. Child abuse adequately defined would mean the ill treatment of a child. This could take the form of verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse. As one can see, any form of these would inevitably damage a child.

The Hindu community has always placed a high value on children. They were the focus of family life, and this is evident since the time of Rama. The entire Ramayana narrative is initiated through Dasaratha's yearning for a child. Ironically in our age, although blessed with children, some parents only interact with their children in abusive ways.

In an interview regarding the present status of morality, one interviewee (who is involved in considerable community work) pointed out that the disintegration of family and abuse are by far the most damaging to society. He elaborated on some cases. I shall just use one to reveal how dysfunctional the family has become and the impact of abuse on children.

The area that this interviewee serves is of a very low economic background. Many are single parent families. One such family, headed by the father, as the mother is deceased, is in a most distressful state as the children (a 17-year-old and a 13-year-old) face much abuse. The father receives a state grant. However, he uses the bulk of this money for alcohol, depriving the children of basic necessities like food. He explained that these children sometimes go without food for two to three days, which impacts very negatively on their scholastic performance, and health. The abuse does not stop here. The father in his drunken state beats them up very severely. Once the 17-year-old child was beaten up so badly that the child had to be rushed to a hospital, with a head injury. The father, drunk or not, feels no remorse. The only way to safeguard the

child was for the child to be removed from that home. This is not the end of the child's problem as the scars of abuse will constantly traumatise the future of this child. This entire case brings to light how some families have degenerated. Child abuse of any form is damaging to the child and the well being of society, but the one form that horrifies humanity, is that of sexual abuse.

In an article addressing child rape, the statistics revealed were shocking and terrifying. It was reported that, *"over 21 000 child rapes were reported in 2000 and the actual number is suspected to be much higher."* (*Sunday Tribune, News, November 11, 2001: 11*) Many of the perpetrators of such hideous crimes are family members themselves, as explained by Estell Ellis, in her article *"When dad is the enemy."* (*Sunday Tribune, News, November 11, 2001: 11*) What becomes of humanity, when the protectors become the predators?

The family is the institution that should offer the greatest amount of security to individuals, especially children. Under such circumstances can one feel any sense of security at all? Such instances makes Radhakrishnan's statement that, *"We are living in a world in which tragedy is universal,"* (*Radhakrishnan, 1956: 10*) indeed telling.

One may argue that if a family is not involved in such horrendous acts, how are they part of this tragedy. I would like to explain this with the use of an ancient Jewish story narrated on *The Jewish Voice, SABC 1, May 2000*: A widowed woman

had to steal to sustain her family. She was caught by a shop owner and taken to court. On hearing the entire case, the judge found that stealing is an immoral act, and fined the woman ten pounds. He went further and fined every member in that city five pounds, from which he took the woman's fine. The remainder of the money was given to the widowed woman to start up a business so that she could sustain her family. The judge did this as he felt that all the members of society were as guilty as the woman who stole, as they were oblivious to her suffering. Similarly, the morally decayed acts mentioned<sup>2</sup> is part of our society, and with most of us functioning on a morally neutral basis, makes us all part of the tragedy that Radhakrishnan talks of.

It is imperative to mention that acts such as incest were prohibited under pain of death in the *Ramayana* (will be discussed at length in Chapter 4), but it is not met with the same kind of severity in present society. *"Although the law makes provision for a minimum sentence of life imprisonment for the rape of girls under the age of 16,"* (Estelle Ellis, *Sunday Tribune News*, November 11, 2001: 11) this is not always meted out. This article reports on the compromise of such judgements. The article speaks of a father (54) who raped his 14-year-old-daughter, and received only a seven-year jail sentence. This sentence was justified by the Judge, Justice Foxcroft, for the following reasons:

- The man was 54 years old and had no previous convictions.
- In a previous decision handed down in 1996, he and Mr Justice Dennis van Reenen sentenced a father, who had continuously raped



*his two daughters for seven years, to an effective six years imprisonment. In his judgement in that case, Van Reenen was quoted as saying that the rapist "limited his actions to his daughters and there had not been any indication of sexually deviant behaviour outside the family."*

*\_ He said the girl had not sustained serious injuries.*

*\_ Foxcroft had found that this was not the type of person who should spend the rest of his life behind bars.*

*\_ He said there was a possibility the man would recover from "whatever made him do it" and the girl would recover as well. (Estelle Ellis, Sunday Tribune News, November 11, 2001: 11)*

When the custodians of law and order make such comments about incestuous rape, we are again reminded of Radhakrishnan's *"universal tragedy"*.

#### **2.4.2.4 The joint family system**

Traditionally the Indian family used to exist as a joint family, which meant, parents, their children with their spouses, and grandchildren were all housed under one roof. This system had many merits with regard to the welfare of family life, which is lacking in today's nuclear families.

The greatest merit lay in the unity that this system created in family life. It is through unity that the family can survive the greatest of ordeals, whether financial, emotional or even natural. It was a system which ensured a selfless commitment from family members, and all responsibilities were shared.

Another merit lay in the positive impact it had on children. Children were not left in the care of nannies, which present circumstances demand. There were

always adults around a child, and the child had a range of adult role models to emulate, as they were surrounded by so many adults, who loved and cared for them.

The joint family was normally headed by the eldest, mostly old parents, and it is here that the joint family system exhibits great merit. It was through the older generation that spiritual and cultural knowledge was transmitted. The elders of such a family guided the family in matters of culture and spirituality. It was such a family system that would continue to give the appropriate status to the elderly, which the present nuclear family ideology cannot provide.

#### **2.4.2.4.1 Breakdown of the joint family system and its impact on family life**

The dismantling of the joint family system was initiated by, *"the Group Areas Act No 41 of 1950 which dislocated settled communities and caused great harm to the joint family system."* (Shukla, 1989: 224) This meant that the masses of families had to relocate in new settlements, breaking up the joint family system as *"the houses provided for them were too small and two and sometimes three houses were required to accommodate a single family of Indians."* (Shukla, 1989: 225)

This meant that the security and status of many family members were destroyed. The family was now split up, and the elders were accommodated in

just one home, thus their inputs with regard to spiritual and cultural matters were limited to the single family that they lived with.

The other factor impacting largely on the joint family system was westernisation. The nuclear family which is a western ideology, is very attractive with its emphasis on privacy and independence, thus in present circumstances many children prefer living on their own. This however should not be a problem if the physical distance did not bring about emotional distance, but that is what is actually happening today.

In spite of the foregoing, the joint family system induced family members to keep in touch, but presently, the slightest clash of opinion or interests causes family members to keep away from each other, neglecting family bonds and obligations altogether.

Indeed, the joint family system was not without its problems, but its merits outweighed its flaws. Many family tragedies that have been discussed earlier probably would not have occurred in the joint family system.

#### **2.4.2.5 Abuse of parents**

Hinduism accords a very sacred status to parents. Parents are equated to God, *matri devo bhavah* and *pitri devo bhavah*. These sentiments are revealed and heightened in the Ramayana. The narrative shows such sentiments in action.

Although these sentiments prevail throughout the Ramayana, it can most clearly be seen when Rama hears of Kaikeyi's demands to instal Bharata as king and the fourteen-year exile period for Himself. Rama does not feel any form of negativity towards Kaikeyi, and reassures her that her wish will be fulfilled. In doing so Rama protects His father's honour. It is important to mention that Rama entered exile without allowing His father to pronounce the period of exile upon Him, and in doing so attempted to save His father the pain attached to such an injunction.

As explained earlier, the joint family system accorded parents much respect and they were the centre of the household. This, however, is being eroded now, to such an extent that some parents have even been killed while trying to discipline children. One such incident was reported in the *Express*, Mid-August 2003: 2. The article reports on a 17-year-old boy, who returned home late in a drunken state, and put on music very loudly. The father who was awakened by the noise, reprimanded his son, only to have his son stab him. The injury caused him to suffer a heart attack, which resulted in his death. His elder brother then attacked the 17-year-old boy for his wrong actions, only for him to become more aggressive and stab his elder brother. This clearly shows how dysfunctional the family unit has become. The actions of children do not have to be violent for parents to undergo abuse. Sheer neglect of parents' needs and wishes are equally repugnant.

When children are economically secure, many of them would want little to do with their parents whom they start viewing as burdens. Evidence of this phenomena can be seen in the number of aged being put into the Aryan Benevolent Home, an old age home in Durban, which has increased exponentially over the years.

Many people place their parents in old age homes, stating that with the sickness/disability that their parents are afflicted by, it is difficult to manage them at home. At times they do not even try to justify their actions, and simply abandon the aged parents. One such incident was narrated during an interview with a priest that conducts regular prayers at an old age home. It was said that during a prayer, an old lady broke down and started to cry pitifully. On trying to comfort her, she related how her son had her sign over all her possessions, after the death of her husband, and then placed her in the home.

It is extremely sad that individuals who belong to the Ramayana culture with ideals such as Shravan Kumara, who carried his blind parents around on his shoulder, and Rama who entered into exile happily to maintain the honour of his father, now abandon their parents.

Ideally, families should be held responsible for producing a moral individual. However with all the problems the family faces, many are failing in this very profound duty. The remedy for this should be education, but here too, we find

many problematic areas.

#### **2.4.3 Problems with present education system**

Education is that institution of society that could make the greatest impact on society at large. It is the institution that deals with young children and is in the position to encourage, discourage and promote a particular ideology. More often than not, that ideology is in keeping with the ideology of those that rule. As the hands of power change, so will the education system of that country. This should not detract from the inculcation of basic ethics and morals.

This has not always been beneficial to the masses, and the history of South African Education clearly reveals this. The education system of the apartheid regime clearly showed how education can easily be exploited, and used to perpetuate the wrong ideology, as for years the education system was used to teach Blacks that they were inferior to Whites. To date, although we are living in a democratic country, the impact of such an education system still lives on in the minds of many, and many Blacks still regard Whites as superior. Thus, the power of education can be clearly seen.

It is for this very reason, that the South African Education System has gone through some major changes in the form of Outcomes-based Education, and the very recent Revised National Curriculum Statement. But in spite of redress in the education system, it has not been able to eradicate the many problems in

education, such as inequality, poor teacher morale, neglect of moral education, abusive teachers and other such issues.

#### **2.4.3.1 Inequality in education**

The *Gurukula* System of education which prevailed in Rama's time, was ideally designed to promote equality in society. It was a single education system where the rich and the poor all acquired their education together, equally. Economics had no say in the type of education a child would receive. Thus friendship and understanding were shared amongst students from all walks of life, which impacted very positively in their adult life, and made the interaction across class, caste and even race very easy. Evidence of this is seen in Rama's interaction with the host of common folk he encountered during his years in exile, many of whom became His close allies and proteges.

The South African Education System was initially manipulated by the evils of apartheid, and now by the evils of economics. The type of education a child receives depends solely on what parents can afford. The education is divided into three very distinct types, namely the private schools, which cost a lot, but learners at such schools enjoy luxurious resources and opportunities. The next type of education is the ex-model C schools (historically white schools) which are very well resourced and also cost a lot. Lastly, we have the masses attending the public schools which are poorly resourced and face many problems: the

greatest of these are budgetary constraints which has caused many educators to lose their jobs, threatening the security of many, thus impacting very negatively on educator morale.

#### **2.4.3.2 Morale of educators**

Due to the large degree of insecurity that has recently surrounded the education system in the form of redeployment and retrenchment of educators, the morale of educators is at an all time low. As an educator one has to be constantly concerned about status in the staff establishment, which could affect their jobs. The insecurity that they feel is sure to impact negatively on their performance. Aside from insecurity with regard to one's job, educators are faced with many other problems, such as lack of parental support, overcrowded classrooms, lack of respect for educators, and lack of educator's respect for their profession, as well as the new curriculum, all of which lower teacher morale.

#### **2.4.3.3. The National Curriculum and the neglect of morality**

The national curriculum has been guided by Christian doctrine, and this goes back to the National Education Policy Act of 1967, where it was listed as the first statement:

*(a) Education in schools, maintained and managed by the state or by a provincial education department shall have a Christian character, but the religious conviction of the parents*



*and pupils shall be respected in regard to religious instruction and ceremonies. (Behr, 1978, cited in Sached: 42)*

Although this policy speaks of respecting the religious convictions of parents and pupils, very little respect was given to other religious groups. Being Christian in its approach, the curriculum promoted Christian ideology. Christianity, like all religions, is a storehouse of good. However, a focus on it minimises the value of other cultures. Consequently the Hindu child who is exposed to Christianity, may tend to neglect his/her own religious identity, and it is one's religion that enforces moral conduct. Values and morals that govern Hinduism, have certainly been neglected and continue to be neglected in our education curriculum.

The entire curriculum tends to neglect the moral development of a child as a focus of education, and favours academia and sports. Swami Sivananda very wisely says of education:

*Education is not the amassing of information, and its purpose is not mere career hunting. It is a means of developing a fully integrated personality and enabling one to grow effectively into the likeness of the ideal set before oneself. Sport and recreation have their place, but they are strictly subordinate and secondary to the main purpose of education, namely character- building, and learning of the arts and sciences. (Swami Sivananda, 1990: 10, 11)*

Although the learning area, Life Orientation, is said to incorporate spiritual and moral education, it is only one part of the entire learning programme, and is

only included in learning outcome 2 (RNCS Policy Document, 2002: 7) clearly revealing how compartmentalised such topics are in our curriculum. It is not the focus of our education. We tend to focus on skills and secular survival to such a large extent that the problems in society clearly reveal that the education of our society is failing to produce good humans. As long as we do not change our education system and its stance about morality of a nation, a very miserable future lies ahead of us. Sri Satya Sai has aptly said:

*In this world of declining morals and human values, where science and technology has advanced to a point where man is capable of not only destroying himself, but the entire world, education in human values is a ray of hope for the future. ( Sri Satya Sai, 1988:1)*

If a focus on morality could heal our nation, then how is it that we still continue to neglect it? This neglect stems from a host of reasons, of which the most significant reason for this may be attributed to the fact that society is economically driven. We prioritise survival with regard to materialistic achievements, and not character. We are so caught up in achieving such a goal that the lack of morality is unnoticed.

In addition to limitations in the curriculum, educators themselves may not be equipped to advance a learner's spiritual and moral growth. This, too, may be caused by various reasons, such as: The educator's own cultural and religious beliefs if they are different from that of the learners he serves. Most schools are

multi-cultural, so which culture does one use as a norm? The workloads of educators demand the learners be efficient in the learning areas, thus they tend to focus on completing such content. Another reason for this may be due to the fact that some teachers lack notions of morality themselves.

#### **2.4.3.4 Immoral educators**

In recent years society was shocked when news of educators abusing learners surfaced. Some educators abuse learners, emotionally, physically and sexually. In doing so, they have jeopardised the status of all educators. Where educators once enjoyed a prestigious position in society, they have now become an object of ridicule due to the acts of their colleagues.

Although emotional and physical abuse is wrong, its effects are less damaging to the educational atmosphere when compared to sexual abuse.

The media has reported on numerous incidents of this crime. For example:

-The *Sunday Tribune, Herald, June 28, 2002*: It reported on parents of a school in Phoenix being absolutely disgusted with the actions of an educator, who has been accused of sexually abusing some learners.

-The *Sunday Times, September 14, 2003*: 2 carried an article where an educator had to be dismissed after being found guilty on six charges of sexual molestation, and gross misconduct against learners.

- The *Rising Sun*, August 12-18, 2003: 5 reported on an educator who had been having a sexual relationship with a 10-year-old child.

Such deeds have destroyed the entire body of trust that should exist between educators and the community that they serve. Due to the immoral climate that we are living in, one cannot blame parents for not trusting educators. This is so different from the noble *Gurukula* system of education that existed in the *Ramayana*. The Guru was of such a noble character that parents left their children in their care for the entire duration of their studies. Being a noble, moral being, the Guru imparted these characteristics onto his learners, thus ennobling society.

The following reflects the lofty position of the Guru;

*The teacher has the greatest role in moulding the future of the country. Of all professions, his is the noblest, the most difficult and the most important. He should be an example to his pupils. If a teacher has a vice, thousands are polluted. (Sri Satya Sai, 1988: 54)*

The unfortunate reality of immoral educators is that they will continue to pollute our society even further. Society is already immersed in many problems, which have their impact on education. One such problem is that of the AIDS pandemic.

#### **2.4.3.5 HIV-AIDS and its effects on education**

The AIDS pandemic has made its impact even in education. It is now national

policy, that children are well informed about the AIDS virus. This is indeed meritable. However, parts of the awareness process demand that learners are informed about safe sex. Safe sex could very well promote promiscuity. It also accords a stamp of approval to premarital sex. If anything, ideology surrounding abstinence should be promoted. Loose moral stances regarding sexuality have found stronger grounds, as condoms can be distributed at schools to children “as young as seven.” (*The Rising Sun*, Vol 17, No 24, July 16-22, 2002: 1) The article reports on how society needs to become more moral, and that the need to “moralize” should certainly supersede the international stance to “condomize”.

This approach to inform learners about the AIDS virus and the promotion of safe sex is contradictory to the *Brahmacarya Asrama*, where the student completed his studies in a state of celibacy, focusing all his energy on acquiring knowledge. The success of such a strict code of conduct, is very visible in Rama, Bharata and Lakshmana’s actions throughout the narrative.

#### **2.4.4 Media and its lax approach to morals**

At the national summit, regarding moral regeneration, held in Gauteng in April 2002, the Deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, stated that much of the society’s evils are a direct result of moral decay. He believes that the break away from traditional values exacerbates moral decay. Other delegates felt that moral decay that is so prevalent can be attributed to the “*relaxation of censorship*”

*laws, and the over exposure of American culture via the media.” (Sunday Times, April 7, 2002: 13)*

#### **2.4.4.1. The promotion of American culture**

National television screens a multitude of shows that have no regard for morality. It portrays the western world, in most cases the American life, weak with regard to its moral standing, yet very glamorous. Even in family sitcoms, morality is neglected. In the American culture the concept of dating by children who are as little as 12 is accepted, and portrayed as the norm. Other aspects such as the promiscuity of the characters, are portrayed as something glamorous.

It is important to note that Indians have somehow come to depend on Indian (Bollywood) movies for cultural nourishment. However many contemporary Indian movies mimic American culture, thus we are overly bombarded by this culture, in movies and serials on television.

#### **2.4.4.2 Screening times of certain serials**

A young mind is most impressionable. Thus, the material a child is exposed to should not be of low moral content. This however is difficult to adhere to as certain soaps, namely: Days of Our Lives, The Bold and the Beautiful, which are filled with episodes of infidelity, promiscuity, thieving and deceit are screened early in the evenings, and repeated in the mornings on national television.

Serials of such low moral standing should not be screened so early in the evening when young children may watch them, and be instilled with wrong values about morality.

#### **2.4.5. Crime**

We are living in a time, where we are not safe from criminal activity anywhere. Hijacking, killings, robberies, rapes and corruption are but some of the criminal activities that are presently ravaging society. There is no safe place from such evils. One has to constantly concern oneself with safety and security, to a state of paranoia, as such crimes occur so frequently.

The national newspapers carry articles of such lawlessness regularly, which shows how often such actions take place. People are not safe in their very homes, and have to ensure security through burglar guards and alarm systems. The poor economic background has always been blamed for the high crime rate in the country, but this is not completely true. If it is pure economics, what would cause such incidents:

A married man, father of two, who is a paramedic, abducts and rapes a 12-year-old girl. (*Post, September 3-5, 2003:1*)

What would cause a doctor to rape a 17-year-old pregnant patient? (*The Express, End-August, 2003:2*)

What is it that causes parents and educators to abuse children under their care?

What is it that causes humans to inflict such harsh pain on fellow humans? Does all of this really stem from economics, or some greater evil? How is it that such acts continue to take place? This could very well be attributed to the fact that as a society, we do not nourish the moral fibre of society. The other reason may be directly attributed to our legal system.

#### **2.4.6 The legal system**

The sad reality of the legal system is that it can be exploited. It is also very lax in the way it metes out punishment to those that break the law. The abolition of the death sentence probably plays a great role in the proliferation of crime. Those that commit criminal offences, if caught, at worst would have to serve a life sentence in prison, but in most cases they are released after some years of serving their sentence.

A murderer, child molester or rapist would pay for his wrongs in prison. In fact no matter how horrendous the crime may be, the most severe sentence one may receive is life imprisonment. Such punishment is extremely different from the punishment meted out in the Ramayana.

Rama killed Taraka and Subahu, for the ruthless killing of so many innocent people. Bali was killed for establishing an incestuous relationship, so were all



others who carried out adharmic actions. The fact that one may not lose his or her life via the legal system, makes the perpetrators of crime brazen enough to continue doing wrong.

This chapter provided an overview of the present status of morality, so that the need for moral transformation becomes clear and incontestable. The following chapter will discuss the views of respondents and interviewees dealing with the present status of morality and how the Ramayana, if at all, can remedy the evils of society.

# CHAPTER THREE

## RAMAYANA AS A BASIS FOR MORAL TRANSFORMATION IN SOCIETY

This chapter deals with responses from questionnaires and interviews with regard to the overall potential of the *Ramayana* to bring about moral transformation in society. Through the analysis of data, light will be shed on the following issues: Knowledge of the *Ramayana* and its moral implications, the present status of morality in society as viewed by the respondents and interviewees, the *Ramayana* and its impact on the lives of the respondents and interviewees and the ability of the *Ramayana* to bring about moral transformation in society. These are the goals of this chapter and intend to be achieved via analysis of the questionnaires and interviews.

### **3.1 Information regarding the sample**

The questionnaires and interview schedule contained the same questions, with the exception of one extra question that appeared in the interview schedule. The reason for having an interview schedule, that covered the same questions, can be attributed to the fact that many people may not be able to write down their thoughts, and the interviews would give them the opportunity to respond freely. Some people would find it easier to talk about issues, rather than write about

them. Thus when distributing questionnaires, an alternative to an interview was offered to some. This however meant people having to set aside time for interviews, and with the busy lifestyles that people lead most of them opted to complete the questionnaire, rather than the interview.

### **3.1.1 Numbers constituting the sample**

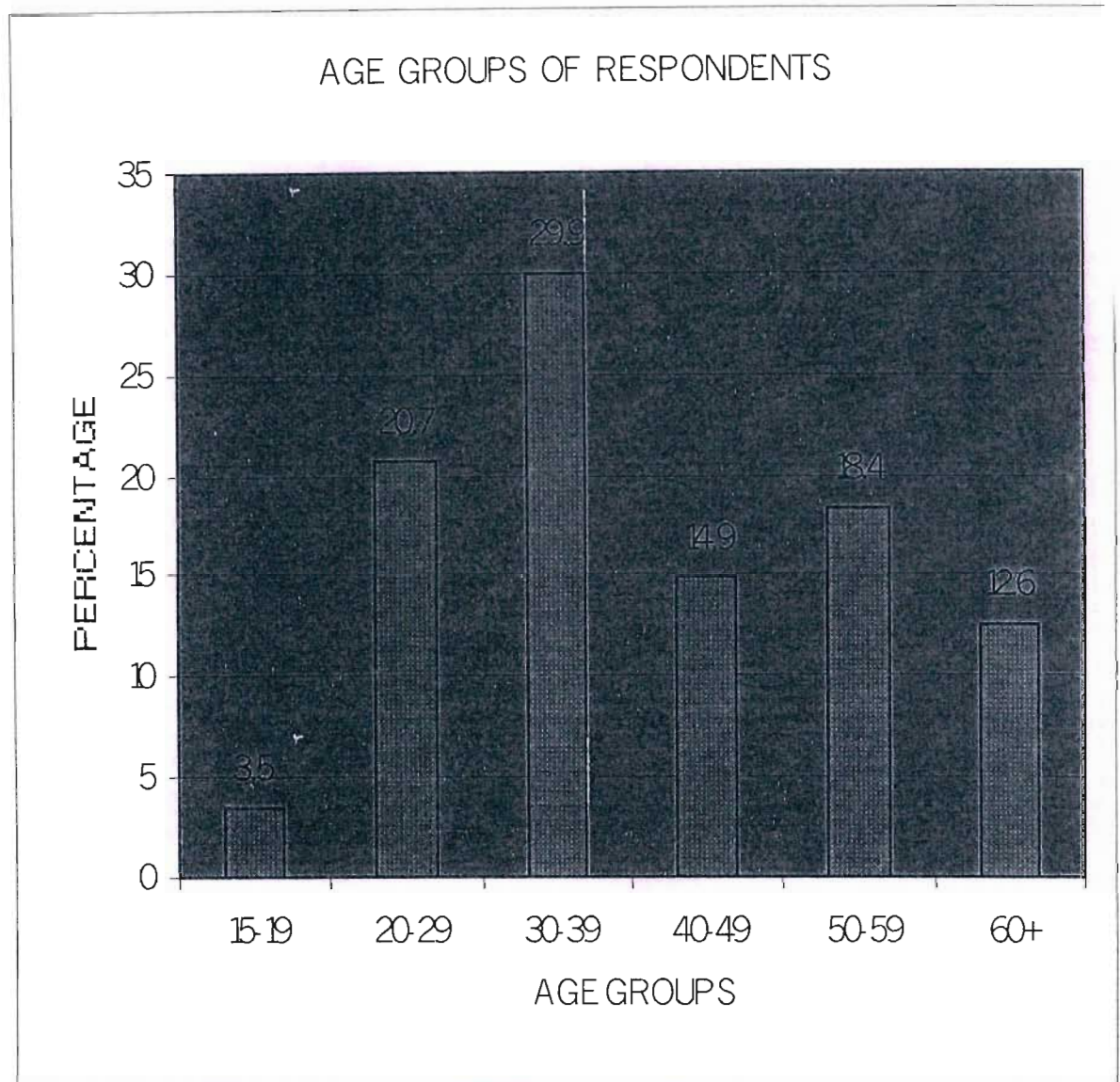
A total of 200 questionnaires were administered, and only 88 were returned, of which 11 were incomplete (only page one of the questionnaire was complete, thus they could not be used), making the total number of valid questionnaires 77. 10 interviews were conducted, which would be included as the sample. The 10 interviews and the 77 completed questionnaires will be used as the sample, which would be a total of 87. This sample would henceforth constitute a 100%, made up of the interviewees and respondents together, and **would be referred to as respondents.**

### **3.1.2 Residential areas**

Most of the respondents came from Durban and surrounding areas, such as Berea, La Lucia, Durban North,, Effingham Heights, Reservoir Hills, Phoenix, Newlands, Avoca, Overport, La Mercy, Northdene, Kloof, Sea Cow Lake, Kharwastan, Umhlatuzana, Shallcross, Havenside, Chatsworth and Pinetown. A few of the respondents were from Pietermaritzburg, Howick, and Stanger,

and Parkgate, Lakefield, Benoni and Lenasia in Gauteng.

### 3.1.3 Age groups of respondent



*Graph A - Age groups of respondents*

A variety of age groups were targeted for this study, but it becomes clear from the statistics that the Ramayana is not familiar across all ages. From the respondents only 3.5% were from the 15 - 19-age group, 20.7% were from the 20

- 29 age group, 29,9% from the 30 - 39 age group, 14,9% were from the 40 - 49 age group, 18,4% were from the 50 - 59 age group, and 12,6% from the 60+ age group. The incredibly low number of youth, (15 – 19 years) that know about the *Ramayana* may be attributed to the fact that many parents are ignorant about religion and are unable to educate their children with such knowledge. The other reason for this, as explained in Chapter 2, may be attributed to the schooling system. As it lacks knowledge of moral and spiritual values, and stresses academia and sport, and being still largely Christian in character, it would leave the Hindu youth destitute with regard to his or her culture.

### 3.1.4 Occupations

The respondents were from a wide variety of fields, from students to retired persons, as illustrated in the table below:

Occupation	%
Students	4.6
Managerial/clerical	12.6
Artisans	1.2
Medical	9.2
Accountant	3.4
Business	6.9
Educators	17.3
Lecturers	3.4
Educators of Hindi	5.8
Hindu Priest	2.3
Military	1.2
Technical	6.9
Sciences	3.4
Housewife	6.9
Retired	14.9

*(Table 1 – Occupation of respondents)*

Of the respondents 4.6% are students, 12.6% in the managerial and clerical field,

1.2% are artisans, 9.2% are in the medical field, 3.4% are accountants, 6.9% are businessmen, 17.3% are educators, 3.4% are lecturers, 5.8% are educators of Hindi, 2.3% are Hindu priests, 1.2% are in the military, 6.9% are in the technical field, 3.4% are in the science field, 6.9% are housewives, and 14.9% are retired.

This clearly shows that the *Ramayana* is not restricted to a particular class, it has a very wide audience, which reveals the versatility of the *Ramayana*. Its narrative has something of interest to just about everyone. The unfortunate aspect, however, as revealed through the annalysis of data, is that most of the respondents have a very superficial understanding of the *Ramayana*, devoid of its moral implications.

### 3.1.5 Sex of respondents

Sex	%
Males	49,5%
Females	50,5%

(Table 2 – Sex of respondents)

49,5% of the respondents are males, with 50,5% being females. This information is very encouraging, as it negates the misconception that men generally have authority over religion.

### 3.1.6 Marital status

Majority (67,8%) of the respondents are married, 28,7% single, 2,3% are widowed, with only one respondent being divorced. It is evident from this, that the *Grhastha Asrama* is by far the most popular *asrama* amongst the respondents.

### 3.2 Knowledge of Hindi

Knowledge of Hindi	%
No understanding of Hindi	5,8%
Understand simple Hindi	20,7%
Understand and speak simple Hindi	27,6%
Understand, speak, read and write Hindi.	45,9%

(Table 3 – Knowledge of Hindi)

As a minority, one's cultural identity is always being relegated, especially with regard to one's mother tongue. Thus it is very pleasing to note that a very low number (5,8%) of respondents claimed to have no understanding of Hindi, and 45,9% said that they are able to read, write, understand and speak Hindi. 20,7% said that they are only able to understand simple Hindi, with 27,6% stating that they are able to understand and converse in simple Hindi.



### 3.2.1 Qualification in Hindi

Respondents qualification in Hindi	%
No qualification in Hindi	63,2%
Some qualification in Hindi	36,8%

(Table 4 – Qualification in Hindi)

Of the respondents only 36,8% of the respondents had some qualification in Hindi, while 63,2% had no qualification in the language. This may be due to the fact that the language is not given much status in the country. The primary concern of acquiring education, is to secure economic survival, thus Hindi is neglected.

Of those respondents that have stated that they have qualifications in Hindi, 39,6% were males, and 60,4% females. From this one can see that women seem to be keener in the maintenance of their cultural identity.

25% of these respondents that possessed a qualification in Hindi had obtained their qualification in Hindi at a tertiary level.

### 3.2.2 Institution through which qualification was obtained

Respondents stated that they have obtained their qualification in Hindi from the following institutions: University Of Durban Westville, Hindi Shiksha Sangh,

Religious organisations, Government schools and the Arya Yuvak Sabha's Hindi classes.

### 3.3 Religious affiliation of respondents

Religious affiliation	%
Sanathan	79,3%
Arya Samaj	5,7%
Other	4,6%
Left blank	10,4%

(Table 5 – Religious affiliation of respondents)

A very large number (79,3%) of the respondents are *Sanathanists* (Hindus that worship the divine through a form or varied forms). 5,7% being *Arya Samajists*, these are Hindus who perceive the divine as being formless, while 4,6% belonged to other divisions of Hinduism, and 10,4% of the respondents left this question blank. Only one respondent explained leaving this question blank, as she is Christian. The remainder of this 10,4% could be attributed to religious ignorance or apathy.

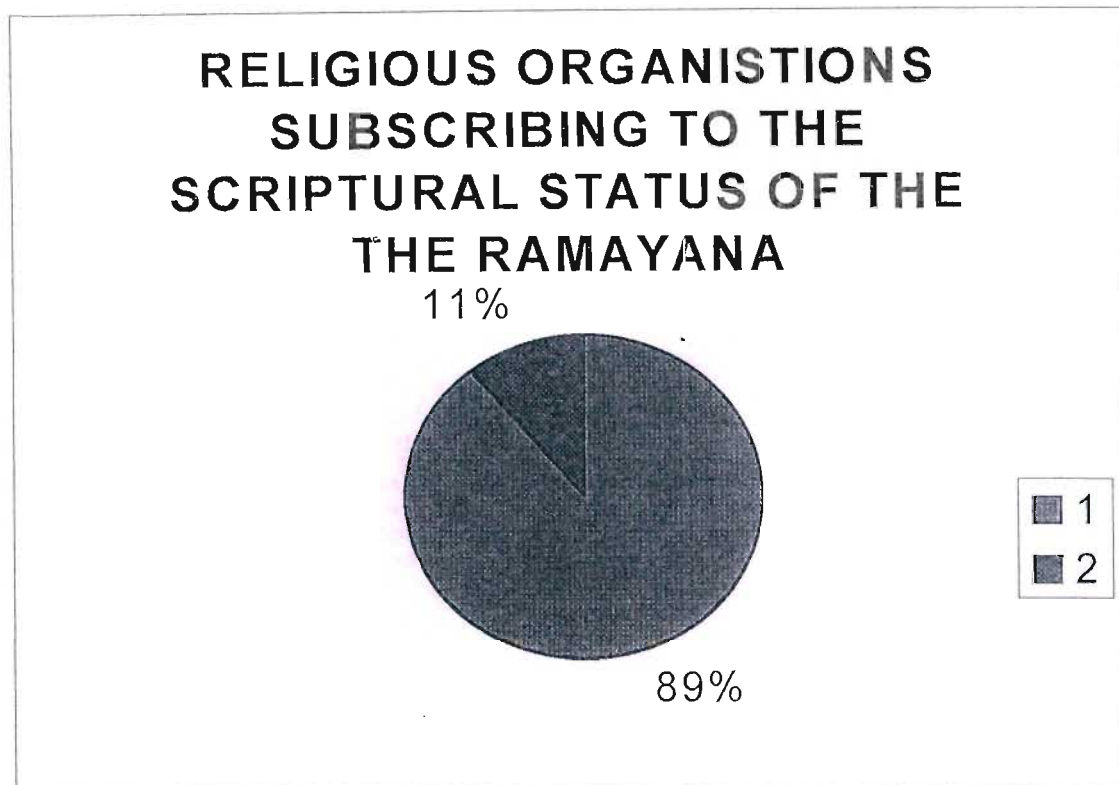
### 3.3.1 Respondents belonging to religious bodies/organisations

<b>Respondents belonging to religious bodies/organisations</b>	<b>%</b>
Belongs to a religious organisations/bodies	52.9
Not belonging to any religious organisations/body	47,1

*(Table 6 – Respondents belonging to religious bodies/organisations)*

52,9% of the respondents stated that they belonged to religious organisations while 47,1% of the respondents did not belong to any religious organisation or body. Although the majority of the respondents belonged to religious bodies, some of these bodies do not subscribe to Rama worship.

3.3.1.1 Organisations subscribing to Rama Worship and the scriptural status of the *Ramayana*



(Graph B – Organisations subscribing to Rama Worship and the scriptural status of the *Ramayan*)

(1 REFLECTS ORGANISATIONS SUBSCRIBING TO THE SCRIPTURAL STATUS OF THE *RAMAYANA*, 2 RELECTS ORGANISATIONS NOT SUBSCRIBING TO THE SCRIPTURAL STATUS OF THE *RAMAYANA*)

52,9% of the respondents stated that they belonged to a religious organisation/body. Of these 89% stated that the religious body that they belonged to subscribes to Rama worship and the scriptural status of the *Ramayana*, while only 11% stated that the organisation that they belonged to does not subscribe to this. This clearly reveals that Rama worship is widespread amongst the respondents.

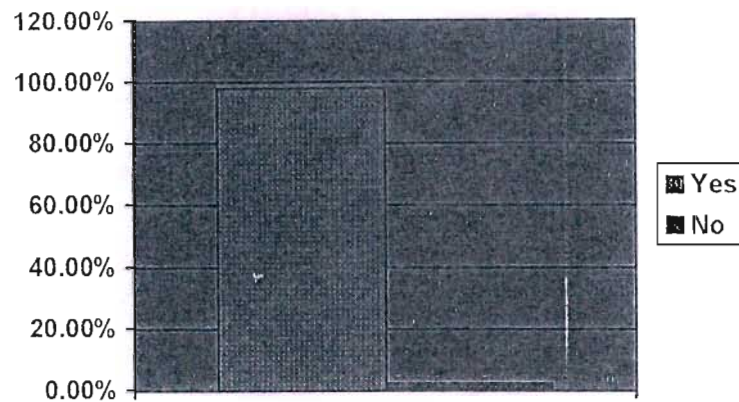
### 3.3.1.2 Frequency of discourses run on the *Ramayana*

Frequency	%
Weekly	24,4
Monthly	7,3
Only during Rama Naumi and Deepavali	65,9
Not at all	2,4

(Table 7 – Frequency of discourses run on the *Ramayana*)

It was disappointing to note that although the majority of organisations subscribe to Rama worship and the scriptural status of the *Ramayana*, very few of them run discourses on the *Ramayana* on a regular basis. Only 24,4% of these organisations (mostly the *Ramayana* Mandalees) run discourses on the *Ramayana* weekly, 7,3% on a monthly basis, and the majority (65,9%) only run such discourses during Rama Naumi and Deepavali. 2,4% do not run any discourses on the *Ramayana* at all. The limited exposure of the *Ramayana* is probably one of the reasons why many respondents showed much ignorance when asked about details of the *Ramayana*.

### 3.3.1.3 Respondents' knowledge of the *Ramayana*



Yes	No
97.7%	2.3%

(Graph C – Respondents' knowing the *Ramayana*)

It was very encouraging to note that the majority (97,7%) of the respondents stated that they possessed some knowledge on the *Ramayana*. Only 2,3% stated that they have no knowledge of the *Ramayana*.

### 3.4.1 Respondents' introduction to the *Ramayana*

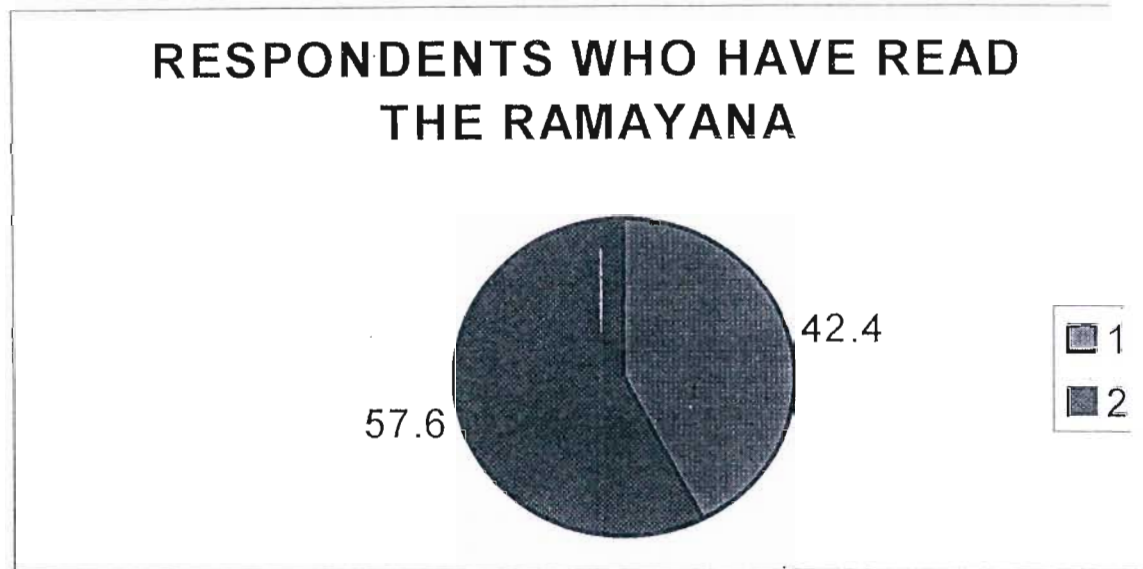
Mode of introduction	%
Read the text	1,2
Was told about it by elders	81,2
Watched Ramanand Sagar's <i>Ramayana</i>	11,8
Watched movies about it	5,8

(Table 8 – Respondents' introduction to the *Ramayana*)

Most respondents (81,2%) revealed that they were introduced to the *Ramayana* through elders. This is not surprising as the Rama Story has survived through generations via the oral tradition, and continues to do so.

It is interesting to note that only 1,2% of these respondents actually read the text, as an initial form of introduction to the *Ramayana*. 11,8% of these respondents were introduced to the *Ramayana* via Ramanand Sagar's celluloid version, and the remainder of 5,8% were introduced to the *Ramayana* through movies on the subject.

### 3.4.2. Respondents that have read the *Ramayana*



(Graph D – Respondents that have read the *Ramayana*)

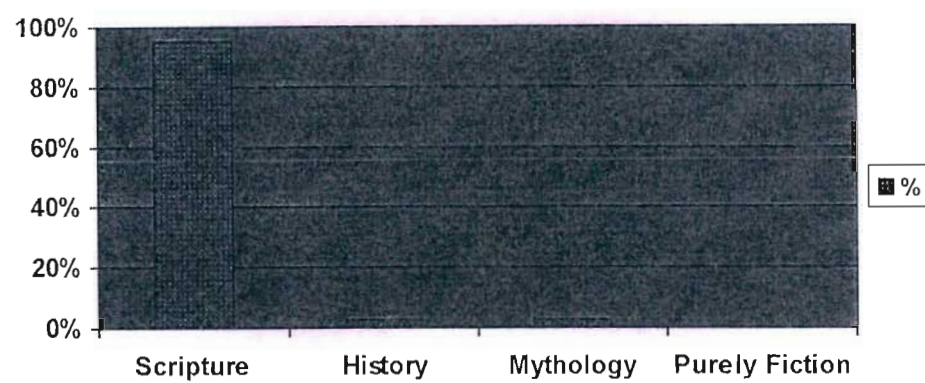
(1-RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE READ THE *RAMAYANA*

2-RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE NOT READ THE *RAMAYANA*)

Majority of the respondents said that they have not read the *Ramayana*. This is very worrying as of all Hindu Scriptures the *Ramayana* is the most accessible and discussed. Consequently many of the respondents displayed considerable ignorance with regard to issues surrounding the *Ramayana*.



3.4.3 Respondents’ view on the Ramayana

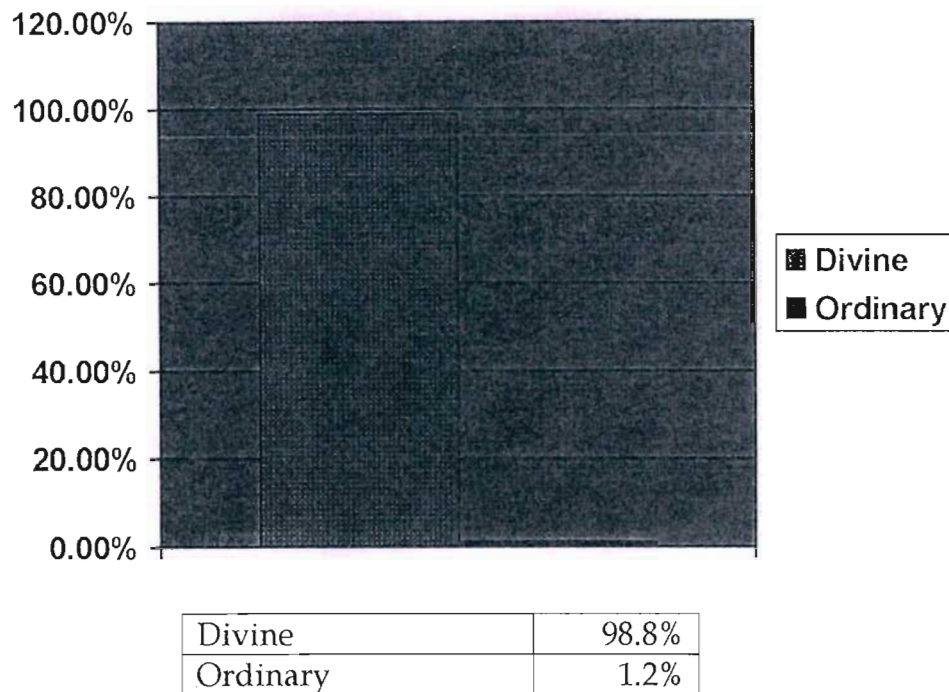


Scripture	95.2%
History	2.4%
Mythology	2.4%
Purely Fiction	0

(Graph E ~ respondents’ view on the Ramayana)

The majority (95.2%) of the respondents perceived the *Ramayana* as scripture, with 2.4% as History and 2.4% as mythology. None of the respondents saw the *Ramayana* as being purely fiction. This clearly reveals that the narrative of the *Ramayana* is accepted as truth, in spite of its extraordinary happenings: like the ability of animals to converse, Hanuman being able to fly, and all His superhuman acts. The mysticism that surrounds the narrative has no impact on the *Ramayana* being classified as a work of fiction.

### 3.4.4 Perceptions of Rama and Sita



(Graph F – Perceptions of Rama and Sita)

Majority (98.8%) of the respondents saw Rama and Sita as divine, with a very small minority (1.2 %) seeing them as ordinary mortals. Many explanations were offered for seeing Rama and Sita as divine, of which the most common was the way They led Their lives. They were always steadfast in the up keep of *dharma*, especially in adversities. Majority of the respondents saw Rama and Sita as incarnations of Vishnu and Lakshmi respectively. One respondent saw, “ *Rama and Sita as the union of humanity with divinity. They were certainly avataras, but Their human form provides us with ideal role models.*”

The respondent that saw Rama and Sita as ordinary justified this belief by saying, “*if one believes in the Ramayana, they can only see Rama and Sita as ordinary,*

*they are certainly not avtaras of any sort."*

This statement is counterbalanced by the fact that the majority of the respondents (98,8%) who believe in the *Ramayana* see Rama and Sita as divine. Secondly in the *Srimad Ramayana* Rama's divinity is repeatedly alluded to, and in the *Ramacaritamanasa*, Tulasidasa clearly refers to Sri Rama as the absolute. One can very easily extract many instances from the text to prove this. For example:

*Vyapaka brahma nirguna bigata binoda,  
So aja prema bhagati basa Kausalya ke goda.  
The unborn and all pervading Brahma who is untainted by  
illusion, without attributes and indifferent to diversion, lay  
in Kausalya's lap conquered by her love and devotion.  
(Ramacaritamanasa, Balakanda: 198)*

*Ramu brahma paramaratharupa, abigata alakha anadi  
anupa.  
Rama is no other than Brahma(the absolute), the supreme  
Reality, incomprehensible, imperceptible.  
(Ramacaritamanasa, Ayodhyakanda, 92:4)*

### **3.4.5 Hanuman in His relationship with Rama and other characters**

Of all the questions that were posed to the respondents, this was the only question that every respondent answered. All the respondents had very positive input towards Hanuman. This is not surprising, as it is indeed an undisputed fact that the majority of Hindi speaking Hindus in South Africa are devotees of Hanuman. He even supercedes Rama, in the eyes of many devotees. Shukla in

her description of Hanuman worship amongst Hindi speaking Hindus in South Africa very aptly says:

*Some people are exclusively Hanuman devotees and for them even Sri Rama fades into the background. Hanuman has come to be worshipped in His own right as a form of the Supreme Lord. (Shukla, 2002: 192)*

One may wonder as to why such a situation prevails, but the reason for this is simple. This is due to the fact that Hanuman is always the solver of great problems in the narrative. He is the one character in the Ramayana that constantly removes adversities that arise in Rama and Sita's lives.

As soon as Hanuman enters the narrative He starts to bring about hope to the helpless situation that Rama is in. He is instrumental in uniting Rama and Sugriva, thus relieving Sugriva of all his problems. He then locates Sita in Lanka and offers Her great comfort at a time when She was suicidal. His meeting with Her renews Her devotion and courage. He is able to go to a foreign land and destroy the city of Lanka all by Himself. During the war He manages to locate and bring a special herb that saves Laksmana's life. Later He rushes to *Nandigram* and prevents Bharata from sacrificing himself. Thus it is no wonder that the respondents found it easy to comment on Him.

All the respondents revealed great admiration for Hanuman, acknowledging Him as an ideal devotee/servant of Rama and Sita. One respondent very ideally described Hanuman as "*the personification of devotion*". It is important to mention

that many respondents referred to Hanuman as *Sri Hanuman* or *Hanuman Baba*, clearly revealing the reverence they have for Hanuman.

One respondent described Hanuman in His relationship with Rama and other characters in the following way:

*Sri Hanumanji lived His life in service to the Lord. He had not a tinge of selfishness in His actions. All His actions were offerings unto Lord Rama. He is a rare jewel among all. There is no Hanuman without Rama and Sita, and there is no Rama and Sita without Hanuman. Sri Hanuman never thought about himself (as though he had not existed). He serves others tirelessly and expected nothing in return.*

Moreover, it is widely believed that Hanuman grants the boon of devotion to God.

#### **3.4.6. Admirable characters in the Ramayana**

The Ramayana has a host of admirable characters, of which Rama, Sita and Hanuman stand out very conspicuously. However when respondents were asked about other admirable characters, many (35.6%) respondents left this question blank. This could be due to the fact that many of these respondents probably are unfamiliar with other characters of the *Ramayana*.

Most of the respondents (28.7%) stated that they admired Bharata for the brotherly love he displays during Rama's exile, especially his refusal to accept the throne. His actions are indeed admirable, although the throne was secured for him through Kaikeyi's intrigue, he is given consent to take over the reigns

of power by the dharmic Vasishta and Kausalya herself. Their consent made his acceptance of the throne legitimate, but he does no such thing. He clearly sees the throne as belonging to Rama, and not himself, and makes every effort to try and persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya. On failing, he returns to Ayodhya, as a caretaker of Rama's kingdom and eagerly awaits the end of the exile to return the kingdom to Rama.

14.9% of the respondents admired Lakshmana, here too for his brotherly love. 10.4% admired Vibhishana, for his siding with righteousness over family. 2.3% admired Urmilla, for being able to survive so many years away from Lakshmana. 6.9% of the respondents admired Sabari, for her devotion to Sri Rama.

One respondent, strangely, admired Ravana. The reason for this was that having abducted Sita, and keeping Her hostage, he could have forcefully married Her, yet he does not. There are anecdotes explaining Ravana's actions towards Sita as being governed totally by fear, hence in view of the present state of morality, one still sees merit in Ravana. This is very significant, as this brings to light that moral lessons can be learnt even from the greatest villain of the *Ramayana*.

### 3.4.7 Favourite part of the Ramayana

The *Ramayana* is such a vast text, that one would expect a great variety of appealing episodes, but this is not so. Most of the respondents, (52%) left this blank. Those that contributed, mentioned the following.

- *Sundar Kanda, for its magnificent depiction of devotion.*
- *The killing of Ravana as it signifies the victory of righteousness.*
- *Rama-Bharata milan, as it is steeped in love.*
- *Manthara Prasanga, as it gives tremendous lessons on safe guarding family life against gossip.*
- *Bharata's refusal to accept the throne.*
- *The return of Rama to Ayodhya.*
- *One respondent stated that the Ramayana and every part of it is his favourite.*
- *One respondent felt that selecting a favourite part of the Ramayana was disrespectful to the Ramayana as a whole. Such a statement discloses the degree of reverence this respondent attaches to the Ramayana.*

All the parts mentioned offer very significant moral lessons, and the true essence of these parts would lie in transferring these lessons into one's daily life, which many individuals tend to neglect.

### **3.4.8 Morality in the lives of the heroic characters in the *Ramayana***

All the respondents very assertively stated that the lives of the heroic characters were firmly governed by dharma. They lead very moral lives and not even the greatest adversities swayed them from the moral path. They however could not cite any examples from the text to substantiate their views.

### **3.4.9 Family relationships with regard to morality in the *Ramayana***

The *Ramayana* demands that family life be governed by morality. This is expected of all members of the family, in order to maintain harmony in family life.

A large part of the respondents (45.6%) stated that they were not sure of the answer. The rest of the respondents stated that morality was beyond compromise in family life. The respondents limited family life to parent and siblings, and probably did not see that the *Ramayana* gives expression to all family ties, even those established through marriage. Although acknowledging that morality was beyond compromise in the lives of the heroic characters, respondents failed to explain their belief. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that to many respondents *Ramayana* means knowing the story of Rama, and they tend to neglect the moral implications of the story.

Of all the characters that proved that morality is beyond compromise in family



life, Vibhishana stands out. His siding with morality, meant going against his entire family, and he remained steadfast in his morality. It was disappointing to note that none of the respondents could recognize or cite such an example.

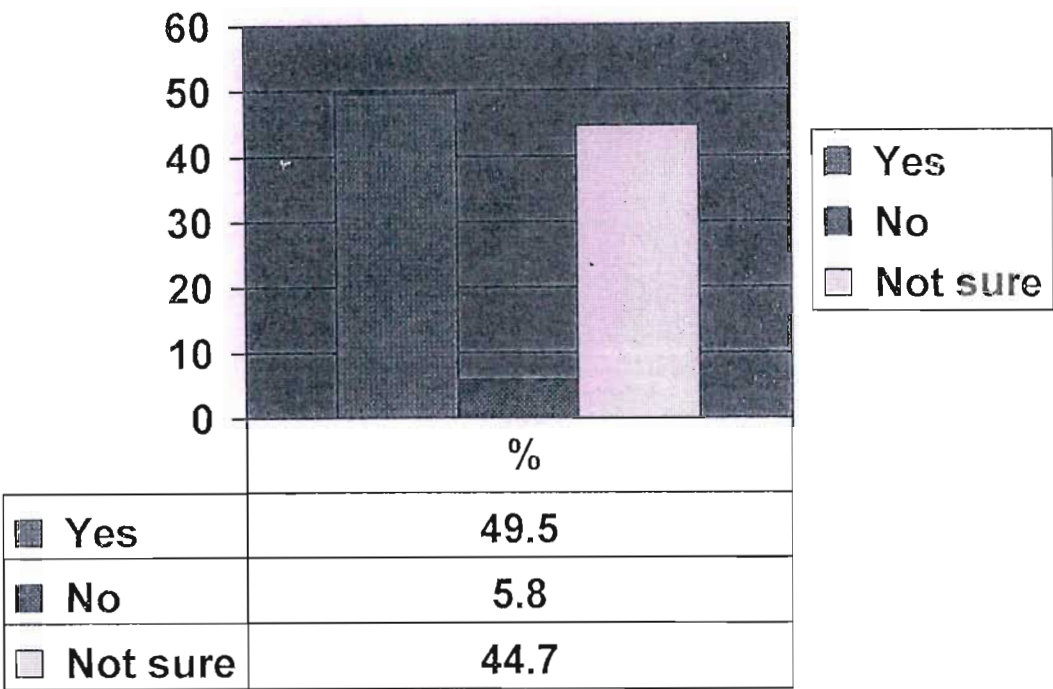
#### **3.4.10 Social unity in the *Ramayana***

Majority of the respondents (68.9%) viewed social unity as family unity, and were unable to comment beyond this. 14.9% stated they were unsure about the specific issue. The remainder were able to cite and explain how parts of the narrative emphasise social unity. They explained how Rama, during His exile, befriended a host of people from a variety of class, caste and race groups.

Such knowledge of the *Ramayana*, which is accepted as scripture, would serve to educate masses on social harmony. This is especially necessary for interaction with people of different race groups and classes, which is still very much needed in our post-apartheid South Africa. The mindsets of the apartheid regime still negatively affect perspectives on inter-racial relationships.

The majority of the respondents regard Rama as an *avatara* (incarnation) of God; thus His example would naturally be what His devotees would want to emulate, or rather what His devotees should emulate, especially in bringing about social unity. What better way to bring this about than to see God in everyone, as professed by Tulasidasa, “*Siyarama maya saba jaga jani.*”

3.4.11 Exposure to the *Ramayana* and its impact on leading a dharmic life



(Graph G – Exposure to the *Ramayana* and its impact on leading a dharmic life)

When asked if the exposure to the *Ramayana* has assisted in respondents leading a moral life: 44.8% stated that they were not sure. 5.8% said no, with the majority (49.4%) stated that it has. A very legitimate reason for only 44.8% of the respondents to have responded so, is that the moral implications of the narrative are very neglected in recitals and explanations. What was observed at most *Ramayana* recitals, was that mere translations of recited passages were given, and discussion on the moral implications of such incidents was totally left out.

When respondents were asked to explain how exposure to the *Ramayana* has

assisted them to lead a moral life, the response was varied. What follows are some of the responses, from which one can clearly see how the *Ramayana* has shaped and changed the lives of some respondents.

- ❖ *I have always wanted to be good ever since I have read the Ramayana and I try my very best to keep to that.*
- ❖ *The Ramayana has reminded me of who and what I am, a custodian of dharma.*
- ❖ *By inculcating the values and morals of the Ramayana in oneself, a dharmic way of life is inevitable.*
- ❖ *Ever since I have been exposed to the Ramayana I aspire towards divinity.*
- ❖ *I have become a better person, the Ramayana guides me like a mother in making right/moral decisions.*
- ❖ *The Ramayana has made me look at others with greater respect, and respect will bring morality.*
- ❖ *I have followed the example of Rama and Sita by respecting my elders, caring for those less fortunate. By being loyal to the one I marry. Not to cause disgrace to myself or my family.*
- ❖ *It has made me more God conscious.*
- ❖ *I rear my family according to religious, cultural and traditional beliefs.*
- ❖ *The Ramayana has made me aware of Hindu dharma.*
- ❖ *By emulating the values of the characteristics of the good characters, such as humility, brotherly love, respect others and wary not to become arrogant under any circumstance.*

- ❖ *I have become more tolerant, persevering and loving. I have lost some negative characteristics, such as power chasing. I have become closer to nature, and feel part of a cosmic whole.*
- ❖ *It has made me wary of what to imbibe and what to refrain from.*

#### **3.4.12 Educational matters in the *Ramayana***

All the respondents were aware that Rama went through the *Gurukula* education system. They also confidently explained the status of the Guru, being equivalent to God. All the respondents were limited in their thinking with regard to the way knowledge was shared/given in the *Ramayana*, as they confined it to the *Gurukul* and the guru. This however is not the whole truth, as knowledge was shared by anyone who possessed it, with anyone who was worthy of receiving it. (To be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.)

#### **3.4.13 Respondents' understanding of the *Ramayana's* stance on the issues of marital infidelity, monogamy, spouse abuse, child abuse, rape and incest.**

It is here that it becomes abundantly clear that the majority (96.4%) of the respondents lack knowledge of the details of the *Ramayana*. Only 4.6% of the respondents were able to cite and explain the *Ramayana's* views on such issues. The large extent of ignorance surrounding these issues may be attributed to the fact that, at many *Ramayana* recitals simple explanations of the narrative are

rendered and moral implications are not interrogated. Also the knowledge and understanding of the reciter could be responsible for this. A reciter is not necessarily an adept *kathakar*. The other reason for the lack of knowledge around such issues may be due to the fact that such issues are still regarded as taboo in Hindu society, and discussion around it is avoided.

Marital infidelity is not tolerated in the *Ramayana*, as one respondent said, “ *Not even Ravana sort to pursue his feelings for Sita without trying to marry Her.*”

The other very clear example where one sees the *Ramayana*’s stance with regard to marital infidelity is in the Ahalya episode. She was transformed into stone due to her infidelity. Rama and Sita’s dedication, love and faithfulness to each other, under the most trying circumstances clearly reveal that the *Ramayana* certainly promotes marital fidelity.

Monogamy has proved to be a problematic issue, as respondents focussed on Dashratha’s polygamy and saw the *Ramayana* as condoning polygamy, and totally neglected Rama’s *eka nari vrata* (monogamy).

Respondents failed to cite issues of spouse abuse in the *Ramayana*. We see the abuse of spouse in Kaikeyi’s treatment of Dashratha and Ravana’s humiliating treatment of Queen Mandodari. The narrative reveals the agony that follows such actions, as Kaikeyi loses her husband and reputation, and Ravana is killed, thus giving candid expression against the abuse of a spouse. In Mandodari’s

case, the innocent wife becomes widowed, further aggravating her suffering.

Although there is no mention of rape in the narrative, the way in which Ravana treats Sita, using many ways to gain her consent for marriage, clearly reveals that even Ravana, being as villainous as he was, still desisted from using brute force. No respondent could comment on such an issue.

The reason why most people remain ignorant about the *Ramayana's* view on incest may be attributed to the fact that the moral law against incest is pronounced in a very controversial episode, and that is the slaying of Bali. People tend to focus on the way that Bali was killed (Rama shooting him with an arrow whilst hiding behind some trees) and labour the question whether Rama's actions were in keeping with *dharma*, and not the seriousness of Bali's crime – forcefully taking his younger brother's wife as his own. (To be discussed at length, in the following chapter.) Hindu prudery vis-à-vis sexual matters could also be responsible for the relegation of the issue.

### **3.5 Respondents' views on problems in society.**

All the respondents saw society to be plagued with immense problems. This however is in keeping with the expectations of the Age of Kali (Kaliyuga).

### **3.5.1. The greatest problems in contemporary society**

Most of the respondents listed the following problems:

- *Moral degradation*
- *Lack of respect and spiritual knowledge.*
- *Poor parenting.*
- *Unemployment and poverty.*
- *Neglect of spiritual growth.*
- *Breakdown of family.*
- *Crime in its various forms.*
- *Over exposure to western culture*
- *Insufficient knowledge with regard to one's religion.*
- *Materialism.*
- *Humans focus on the satisfying of their senses only.*
- *Religious ignorance and fanaticism.*

All of these problems are a direct result of moral decadence.

### **3.5.2 The present status of morality**

Morality keeps society from crumbling into a state of disarray. It is people's moral stance that keeps them on a righteous path. From the range of problems listed, one can deduce that the present status of morality is very low. The media is overflowing daily with news of immoral acts, which clearly reveals the

depressing syndrome we find ourselves in. It is clear that to bring about a change in society, we need to regenerate morality in society. All the respondents felt that morality was very neglected in today's society. They felt that every avenue of society was plagued with immoral acts. Some went further to say that, *"morality is at its lowest ebb."*

### **3.5.3 The individual's role in society**

10.3% of the respondents did not answer this question. However it is very encouraging to note that most (90,7%) of the respondents saw the role of the individual in society to be one that contributes positively to society. Some went on further to say that this could only be achieved by living a spiritual life. The very same sentiments are present in the *Ramayana*, where emphasis is placed on being good and ensuring that one's life is used to develop spirituality. The idea of contributing to the welfare of society is echoed as one of the reasons for Rama's birth, *"Rama janama jaga mangala hetu."* (Rama was born for the welfare of the world.)

The entire narrative is steeped with incidents that inspire one to be good, to render help with out any reward, as seen in the characters of Rama and Hanuman.



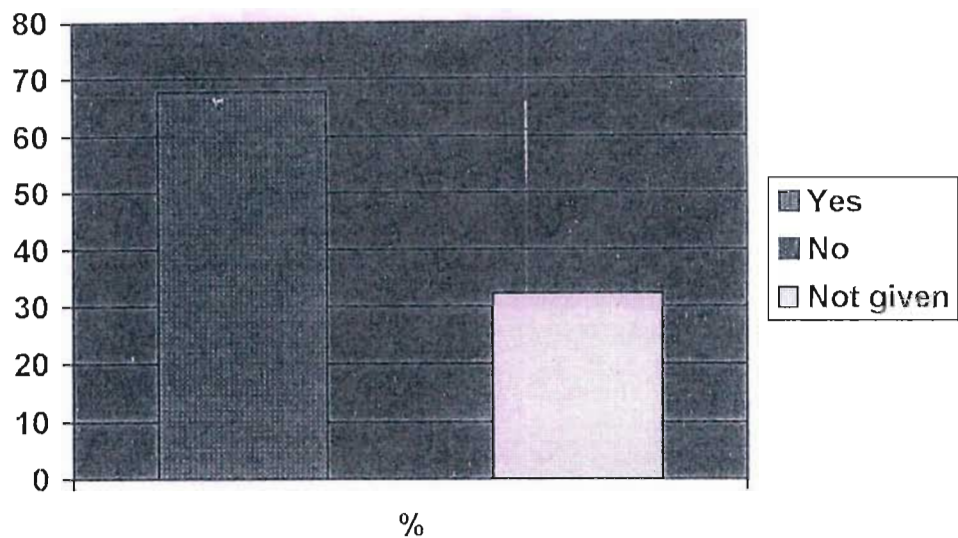
### 3.5.4 Leading a moral life in today's society

It is noteworthy that almost a third (32.2%) felt that it is not possible to lead a moral life in today's society. Some of the explanations for such a response were as follows:

- ◆ *There is too much corruption around us, we sometimes involuntarily become party to it.*
- ◆ *People are so influenced by bad ways that it is hard to escape it.*
- ◆ *We are incapable of changing the minds of society members, thus their interaction with us causes us to compromise our own morality.*
- ◆ *A dharmic being should see God in everyone, with the type of evil doers we have, it is impossible to do this therefore my actions would remain immoral.*

12.6% of the respondents did not answer this question, while the remainder (52.2%) stated that leading a moral life in today's society was very possible, as it is one's individual choice. Of this 52.2%, 89.6% felt that emulating the lives of the noble characters of the Ramayana would certainly assist in leading a moral life.

3.6 *Ramayana* as a remedy to society’s evil



Yes	67.8%
No	0%
Not given	32.2%

(Graph G – *Ramayana* as a remedy to society’s evil)

67.8% of the respondents believed that *Ramayana* has the potential to remedy society’s evils, while 32.2% of the respondents did not answer this question. The high number of respondents that left this question blank, could be attributed to the fact that many of the respondents are unaware of the details of the *Ramayana*. In spite of this, no respondent said that the *Ramayana* was incapable of providing a remedy to society’s evils.

### 3.6.1 Exposure to the *Ramayana*

Exposure to the <i>Ramayana</i>	%
As early as possible during childhood	70.1
At school	20.7
In one's teens	0
As young adults	9.2
Not necessary to be exposed to it	0

(Table 10 - Exposure to the *Ramayana*)

When respondents were asked as to when should one be exposed to the *Ramayana*, an overwhelming number (70,1%) of the respondents stated that one should be exposed to the *Ramayana* as early as possible, during childhood. 20,7% of the respondents believed that respondents should be exposed to the *Ramayana* at school. 9.2% of the respondents felt that one should be exposed to the *Ramayana* as young adults. None of the respondents saw the teens as an appropriate age to be exposed to the *Ramayana*. It was very encouraging to note that no respondent felt that it was not necessary to be exposed to the *Ramayana*.

The 70,7% of respondents that saw it necessary for individuals to be exposed to the *Ramayana* as early as possible during childhood, probably felt this way as morals and values are easier to impart to young children. If they are exposed to a text like the *Ramayana*, then their moral foundation would be set. Children love stories, and the *Ramayana* and its masses of lessons in human values and morals

are put forth via a very dynamic narrative that would easily appeal to children.

Some of the respondents (9.2%) felt that for children, the *Ramayana* is too vast a text and its moral lessons would be above their understanding, and therefore saw the exposure to the *Ramayana* to be ideally suited for young adults, where they could understand, and appreciate the moral lessons. This is not true as adults constantly strive to teach children right from wrong, and we often take the assistance of fairy tales to do so. Although fairy tales have a very superficial setting, very significant lessons are taught through them, and that is “*bad guys never win*”, and children understand it very well. This is probably all a child may learn even from the *Ramayana*, but as said earlier it provides the foundation that one could build on at a later stage.

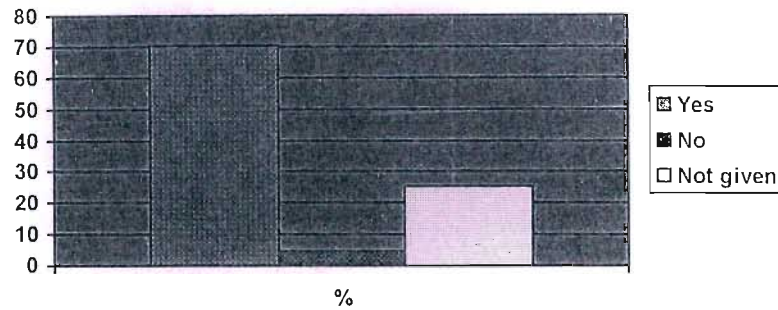
### 3.6.2 Lessons for every day life in the *Ramayana*

There is no human emotion or relationship that is not reflected in the *Ramayana*, thus it offers a multitude of lessons for anyone who is exposed to it. The response here was varied, below are some of the examples.

- *I've learnt to treat my parents and elders with love and respect.*
- *Devotion can deliver one from any crisis, so we should always have faith in God Sri Rama.*
- *People can always be evil, but we should not be influenced by that evil.*
- *I am a better mother. I give my children religious knowledge.*

- *Respect for all beings.*
- *I must keep away from arrogance.*
- *To be a dedicated wife.*
- *Pure love, for God and his creation.*
- *Render help with out looking for any reward.*
- *To be honest, sincere, truthful and a loving person.*
- *I've learnt that pride is the most destructive element one can possess, and I keep away from it.*
- *I love and appreciate family, as one sees its importance in the Ramayana.*
- *To look at everyone as equal and that our actions are to be good.*
- *One should always honour one's word.*
- *I've learnt to be a spiritual person from the Ramayana.*
- *Clearly what to do and what not to do, right from wrong.*

### 3.6.3 The *Ramayana* as morally and spiritually educating



Yes	70.1%
No	4.6%
Not given	25.3%

(Table 12 – The *Ramayana* as morally and spiritually educating)

When respondents were asked whether they felt that the *Ramayana* was morally and spiritually educating, 70.1% of the respondents felt that the *Ramayana* was morally and spiritually educating, 4.6% did not believe that the *Ramayana* was morally and spiritually educating, and 25.3% did not give a response to this question. Although 70.1% of the respondents answered yes, they failed to explain their answer.

### 3.6.4 Responsibility of moral and spiritual education of a child

	%
Home	0
School	0
Religious institutions	0
All of the above	0
All of the above especially the home	100

(Table 11 – Responsibility of moral and spiritual education of a child)

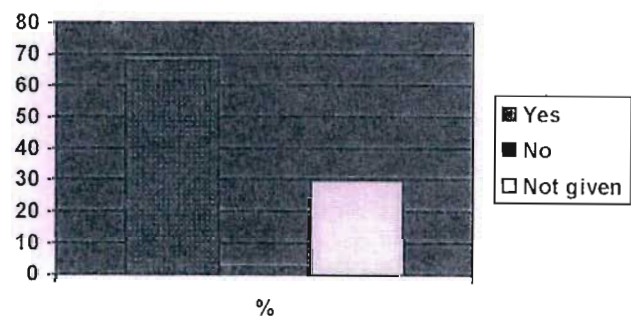
When respondents were asked as to who should be responsible for the moral and spiritual education of a child it was interesting to note that all the respondents (100%) felt that the schools, religious institutions and especially the home should be responsible for such education. If this were to be put into practice, this would mean that adult family members need to be moral, spiritual beings themselves, in order to impart such education, but this is not so in many homes, as many respondents have thus far proved to lack knowledge of the *Ramayana*.

For the home to be truly responsible for the child's moral and spiritual education, a moral and spiritual renaissance is needed in the home. Although Hinduism is not prescriptive, as to dictate a reading of scripture, the only way to empower oneself as a Hindu would be to read the scripture. As mentioned earlier, the *Ramayana* is the most user- friendly scripture, thus it should be the

starting point.

At a *Ramayana* recital, one respondent stated that all the education she needs to give her daughter, is in the *Ramayana*, and that is why she encourages her daughter to attend such recitals. She went further to say that there is no greater role model for any woman to emulate than that of Mother Sita.

3.6.5 The *Ramayana* as a vehicle to bring about change in morality in society



Yes	67.8%
No	2.3%
Not given	29.9%

(Graph I – The *Ramayana* as a vehicle to bring about change in morality in society)

An overwhelming portion of respondents (67.8%) felt that the *Ramayana* is capable of bringing change to society’s moral state. This is very possible, as during the screening of Ramanand Sagar’s *Ramayana* in India, there was incredible change in the moral climate of the viewers as expressed by Ramananda Sagar:



*I have brought the college boy from the disco culture to the Ramayana. College boys don't say hi anymore, they say "Jai Sri Rama Ki." Children have once again begun to respectfully touch the feet of their parents in greeting. (Sagar, cited in Shukla, 2000: 141)*

The 2.3 % of respondents that felt that the *Ramayana* would not be able to bring change to society, explained their view stating that although the *Ramayana* has all the ingredients to remedy society's evils, it still remains very limited. Limited as it is not widely read, and the fact that it being a Hindu scripture would not be seen with merit by members of other religious groups, as they are rather dogmatic in their perception of religion and spirituality.

The 29.9 % of respondents that did not answer this question are probably those individuals who truly are ignorant in their understanding of the moral implications of the *Ramayana*.

### **3.6.6 Means to make the *Ramayana* more accessible**

When respondents were asked on ways to make the *Ramayana* more accessible, 32.2% left this blank.

It was surprising to realise that 18.4% of respondents stated that the *Ramayana* would be more accessible if it existed as an English translation, clearly revealing that they are unaware that the *Ramayana* already exists in English. This also proves that these respondents have not read the *Ramayana*.

11.5% of the respondents stated that a simple English version should be formulated, so that people may read the text without having to battle with the language, and understanding of all the poetic tools. Such Ramayanas are already available, but it is obvious that they have not been well publicised.

1.2% of the respondents stated that the *Ramayana* should be distributed freely by religious organisations.

19.6% of the respondents felt that the *Ramayana* would be more accessible if it was enacted as plays, like previously done.

3.4% of the respondents felt that learning Hindi would definitely make the *Ramayana* more accessible. This is a very significant point, as if one is literate in Hindi, one does not have to depend on translations for understanding the text. Being literate in Hindi also means that one would be able to recite the *Ramayana*, in this way making it accessible to others.

6.8% of the respondents felt that a sure way to make the *Ramayana* more accessible would be to introduce it as 'set work' in schools. One may argue that a multicultural education system would not allow for it to be easily implemented in schools, as the *Ramayana* has a religious and cultural bias. This is true, but present set works, like Shakespear's plays also have a cultural and

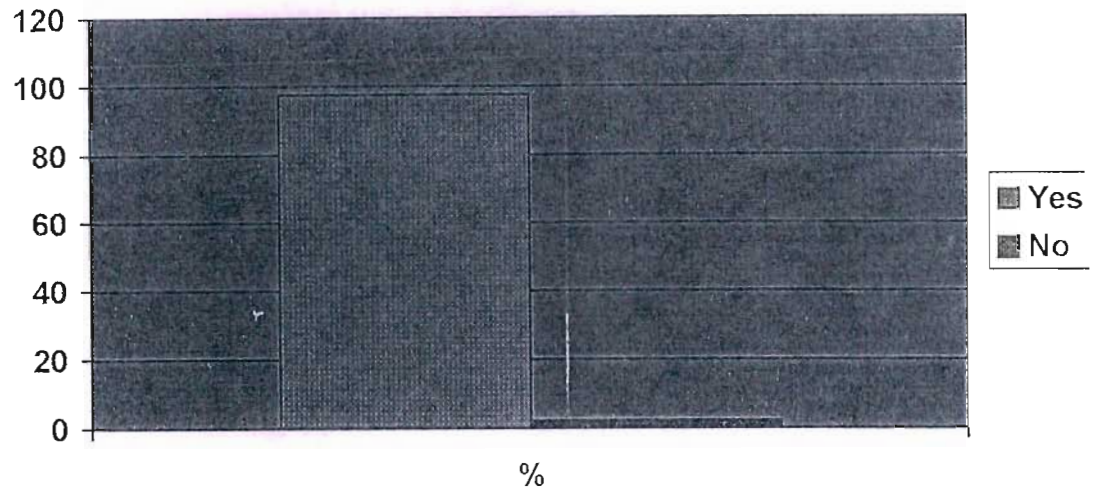
religious bias, but they are taught at schools, thus inclusion of the *Ramayana* at schools would not jeopardise any cultural or religious group. Ideally, multicultural education system should include resources and literature from all cultures. Including the *Ramayana* as text to be studied at schools is a sure move in that direction. Probably the new religious education curriculum could address this issue, and an emphasis on the *Ramayana*'s potential to create a better human society would be appropriate.

Some respondents (5.8%) felt that *Ramayana* schools should be established where the *Ramayana* should be taught. This could be done via religious organisations. One of these respondents envisaged this like Bible classes or *Madressa* that other religious groups have to empower young children in their particular religions.

One respondent, very aptly, stated that the *Ramayana* is very accessible at present. It exists in a variety of forms, and his local library carries two versions of the *Ramayana*, and the complete Ramananda Sagara's *Ramayana* on video. He went on to say that many religious organisations and *satsangas* host classes on the *Ramayana*, which are poorly attended. He continued that the *Ramayana* is accessible, but the state of apathy that lies in the masses of Hindus needs to be addressed.

The fact that 32.2% of the respondents did not respond to this question may be due to the apathy that the above respondent spoke of.

### 3.6.7 The *Ramayana* and its ability to assist those outside Hindu community



Yes	No
97.7%	2.3%

(Graph J – The *Ramayana* and its ability to assist those outside the Hindu community)

Majority of the respondents (97.7%) felt that the *Ramayana* is capable of assisting those outside the Hindu community, and 2.3% felt that this could not be achieved.

The 2.3% of respondents that felt this way explained their response in two ways. Firstly they saw those outside Hinduism as unwilling to accept or acknowledge any merit coming from a Hindu text. The other very interesting reason was that we first need to make Hindus accept and know the *Ramayana* before we go to other religious groups. This statement is very significant, as this chapter has shown that many respondents are very ignorant about the details of the

*Ramayana.*

The 97.7% that believed that the *Ramayan* has the ability to assist individuals outside the Hindu community felt that although being a Hindu scripture, its lessons are universal. It has lessons for just about every facet of life. They felt that the *Ramayana* can be read as ordinary piece of literature, and not as scripture, the lessons would still remain, one does not have to imbibe the religious dogma, but the moral lessons, for creating a better society.

It is important to add that although the *Ramayana* is Hindu in nature, it recognises goodness and benevolence to be greater than religion. This ideology is echoed in the following lines of the *Ramayana*, when Rama says in *Uttarakanda*:

*Parahita sarisa dharma nahi bhai, para pida sama nahi  
adhamai.  
Brother, there is no religion like benevolence, and no sin like  
hurting others. (Uttarakanda, 40:1)*

This clearly honours all benevolent people irrespective of their religious belief. It emphasises goodness as being the greatest virtue. Such ideology implies that just being a Hindu is not sufficient: one has to be a good human being. Also the fact that goodness is not a quality limited to Hindus only, makes us look beyond our own religion and recognise goodness in individuals from other religious groups. Where these lines stress goodness as being greater than any religion, they depict the infliction of pain as the greatest evil. Such sentiments are

universal, and the *Ramayana* as scripture gains tremendous merit as this serves not to solely propagate Hinduism, but goodness. There is no human congregation that can not benefit from such ideology.

The *Ramayana* has proved to be very influential on people from other faiths, where individuals were so impressed by the *Ramayana* and Rama that they have even composed poetry on the subject. One such example is that of Rahim, a Muslim contemporary of Tulasidasa who composed the following couplet:

*Ramacaritamanasa bimala santana jivana prana,  
Hinduana ko bedasama jamanahi pragata kurana.  
The Ramacaritamanasa is the very lifeblood of the holy  
sages. It is akin to the Vedas for the Hindu, and is like the  
Quran to the Muslim.*

A contemporary example of this nature, is the poem: *May it please Lord Rama*, (Appendix D) composed by Professor Poolthupya from Thailand.

The *Ramayana* is steeped with moral lessons, and once one becomes familiar with the narrative and its moral implications, it would become obvious that the *Ramayana* certainly has all the ingredients for an ideal society. The following chapter intends to disclose some of the many moral lessons in the *Ramayana* across various institutions to prove that such a narrative with its vast moral implications certainly can ennoble society.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MORALITY AS DEPICTED IN THE RAMAYANA

In this chapter it is intended to very briefly examine Tulasidasa's depiction of Rama, and some of his deviations from the original narrative of Valmiki, and how these deviations have made the Rama Story more accessible and more acceptable. This chapter also attempts to bring to light some of the intense lessons on morality encompassing various aspects of life, as depicted in the *Ramayana*.

#### 4.1 Tulasidasa, Valmiki and the *Ramayana*

Valmiki is the poet of the *Srimad Ramayana*, the original Sanskrit text. Tulasidasa is the poet of *Sri Ramacaritamanasa*, which is in Awadhi (a dialect of Hindi). The use of Awadhi, which was the spoken language at the time the *Sri Ramacaritamanasa* was written, made the text accessible to the masses. It was for the first time that a text of a spiritual nature was written in spoken language. Prior to this, all texts of a spiritual nature were written in Sanskrit, which only a select few understood, particularly the *Brahmins*. Aside from the language change, Tulasidasa also modified the narrative.

The narratives of the two are very similar, with a few omissions and additions. The greatest difference that exists between the two is in the way the characters

are presented. Where Valmiki presents Rama as an extraordinary human, alluding to His divinity, Tulasidasa overtly presents Rama as God incarnate, and also refers to Him as the Absolute.

It is easy to see the divinity of Valmiki's Rama and Sita in certain episodes, as in the case of the "*Ahalya incident*." It is unthinkable that a mere mortal can restore a woman from stone to flesh. Also the fact that Sabari awaits "*darsana*" of Rama, reveals His divinity. Sita summons the earth "to take Her into her lap" towards the end of the Ramayana, and the earth tears open and Sita enters it. To believe that mere mortals can control mother earth is far fetched. When Rama is to leave the mortal world, Brahma asks Yamadeva, the god of death, to take a message to Rama. The fact that Brahma sends a message to Rama, implies that Rama is not a mere mortal. Details of the message clearly reveal that Rama is no extraordinary man, but God Himself, as evinced below:

*Sa twam manomayah putrah purnayurmanusheshviha,  
kaloeyam te narasreshtha sanipamupavrtitum.*

*You are thus the mind- born son with full longevity residing  
here among human beings, O best among heroes, Death has  
been (sent) to approach you. (Srimad Ramayana, Book vii,  
canto 104:13)*

*Yadi bhuyo maharaja praja icchasyupasotum, vasa va vira  
bhadram te evamaha pitamahah.*

*If, O brave one you desire again to serve (the course) of men,  
then dwell as you wish, may welfare be with Thee thus  
Brahma said. (Srimad Ramayana, Book vii, canto 104: 14)*



*Atha va vijigisha te suralokaya raghava, sanatha Vishnuma  
deva bhavantu vigatajwarah.*

*If, however, O descendant of Raghu there is the desire in you  
to protect the gods, then may the gods fearless have Vishnu as  
their Lord. (Srimad Ramayana, Book vii, canto104, 15)*

Aside from such incidents in the narrative, Valmiki's statements about Rama in his *Ramayana*, reinforce the divinity of Rama. For example in Book 1, 98-100 he says:

*Whoever reads this history of Rama, which is purifying,  
destructive of sin, holy and equal to the Vedas, is rid of all  
sin.*

The history of no mortal can accomplish what has been stated by Valmiki. The above two mentioned instances from the *Srimad Ramayana*, distinctly reveal Rama's divinity, and go beyond just alluding to His divinity. Thus it is no wonder that Tulasidasa succeeded in depicting Rama as man and God with so much of conviction.

One may argue that presenting Rama and Sita as God incarnate, make the high standards of morality less attainable. But this is not so. I believe that this serves as basis to authenticate the dicta of the *Ramayana*. The *Ramayana* is not just a piece of literature. It is regarded as scripture. Thus, we are not just imbibing the virtues of historic figures but that of God. The divinity of the heroic characters makes them accessible to the believer even today, and the immense span of time that exists between the incidents and present becomes insignificant.

The other fact worthy of mentioning is that the “human” in Rama does not give way to the divine. Unlike Krsna, who summons the *Sudarsana Cakra* (His omnipotent discus) in times of need, Rama does no such thing. Rama faces all the trials of life as a “man”, thus making Him a more inspiring figure and a more attainable ideal for the ordinary man. The following statement supports this belief:

*But for us ordinary mortals, to take Krishna as the model for an ideal man is pretty difficult, because the understanding that His is a full Avtara (Poornavatara) of the Supreme Absolute precludes our accepting him as an ideal man. On the other hand, Rama not only behaved as the ideal man but he was careful not to declare himself as an Avtara and for this purpose he went through the ups and downs of life, suffered them and even appeared overcome by them at several times. (Krishnamurthy; 1994: 49)*

The omissions of certain incidents of the original narrative in Tulasidas’s version, has exerted positive impact on the Rama Story in totality. The greatest omission lies at the end of the *Ramacaritamansa*, where the Valmiki *Ramayana*’s narrative has the abandoning of Sita, the death sentence of Lakshmana and the eventual exit of Rama from the mortal world, Tulasidas’s *Ramayana* ends in *Uttarakanda*, with Rama and Sita on the throne. This ending has greater appeal, as it is human nature to be drawn towards a happy ending. It also symbolises the endlessness of Rama and Sita’s glory and Their story, as expressed in the following words, “*Hari ananta, hari katha ananta.*”

Yet another very visible difference is the way in which Tulasidasa maintains *maryada* (*decorum*) throughout his text, where he omits or modifies all sensuous incidents and descriptions. A conspicuous example of this is the “*Ahalya incident*.” In the *Ramayana* of Valmiki the episode is detailed, describing Indra’s unrighteous and lustful proposals to Ahalya and Ahalya’s desire for the king of gods, whereas in Tulasidasa’s *Ramayana* the incident is explained in the following way only:

*Pucha munihi sila prabhu dekhi, sakal katha muni kahi  
bisekhi.*

*Noticing the rock, the Lord asked the sage about it, and the  
latter told him the entire story in detail. (Balakanda; 209: 12)*

Aside from incidents *per se*, Tulasidasa was also wary in his descriptions of the men and women. He ensured that no sensual, lustful connotations were brought in his descriptions, yet conveying fully the magnitude of physical beauty. Such examples can be sited in the Janaka Vatika, King Janaka’s garden where Rama and Sita first meet.

Rama and Lakshmana are collecting flowers in the garden for Vishwamitra’s prayer. At the same time, Sita and Her friends are on their way to the Gauri Temple. One of them wanders off and sees Rama and Lakshmana. She is fascinated by their beauty and goes back to her friends, incapable of composing herself. When one of them asks her as to what has pleased her so, she briefly describes Rama and Lakshmana thus:

*Dekhana bagu kuanr dui ae, baya kisora saba bhanti sulhae.  
Syama gaura kimi kahaun bakhani, gira anayana nayana  
binu bani.*

*Two princes, she said, have come to see the garden, both of  
tender age altogether charming, one dark and the other fair;  
how can I describe them? For speech is sightless and the eyes  
are mute! (Balakanda;228: 1)*

He uses the same kind of poetic excellence to describe Sita, maintaining *maryada* totally. When Rama sees Sita for the first time, He describes her thus:

*Janu biranci saba nija nipunai, biraci biswa kahan pragati  
dekhai.*

*He felt as though Brahma, the creator, had put forth all his  
creative skill in visible form and revealed it to the world.  
(Balakanda 229: 3)*

Tulasidasa's stance in maintaining decorum (*maryada*) in his text may be explained by the fact that he did not wish to dwell on mere actions, but emphasised the outcome of these actions. He focused on the moral aspects of deeds and not their details. Another very pertinent point is the fact that Valmiki and Tulasidasa, although writing on the same subject matter, wrote for two totally different audiences, separated by an entire *Yuga*.

Valmiki documented the *Rama Katha* of which he was part, a period with an abundance of righteous people, *Tretayuga*. Sensual descriptions probably had no impact on them. Tulasidasa wrote for the contemporary *Yuga* - *Kaliyuga* where hordes of unrighteous are found, who would focus on the details of such acts and neglect their implications. Tulasidasa knew this, as he says it in *Uttarakanda*.

*Aise adhama manuja khala kritajuga tretan nahin,  
Dwapara kachuka brinda bahu hoihahin kalijuga mahin.  
Such vile and wicked men are not to be found in the Satya or  
Tretayuga; a sprinkling of them will appear in Dwapara, but  
in Kaliyuga there will be swarms of them. (Uttarakanda; 40)*

It is also very important not to lose sight of Tulasidas's objective in writing the *Ramacaritamanasa*, and that is *bhakti*. He intended to profess his own devotion and provide solutions to the immense problems of *Kaliyuga*, through *Rama Bhakti*. In fact he saw *Rama Bhakti* as the only way to eradicate the evils of *Kaliyuga*.

Tulasidasa has in his version of the *Rama Katha*, outdone Valmiki. The greatest tools used to accomplish this, aside from his poetic genius, are his firm stance on the maintenance of *maryada*, and his inspirational *bhakti*. Tulasidasa has been described aptly with regard to his poetic excellence in the Ramakrishna edition of the *Ramacaritamanasa* in the following way:

*Tulasidasa has no peer. He has set a standard and reached a  
height in this respect which no subsequent writer of this  
theme has been able to surpass. (Ramacaritamanasa;  
Introduction: 23)*

#### 4.2 Lessons on morality as depicted in the *Ramayana*

Morality should be embedded in the depths of one's character, so that it manifests itself in every avenue of one's life. It should guide one's choices in every role that one has, be it; husband, father, wife, mother, brother, sister, child,

etc. The *Ramayana* is a storehouse of such ideals in morality. The following statement very appropriately sums up this idea:

*Rama is the centre of a household each member of which has furnished an ideal for Indian ethics and moral philosophy: Kausalya the good mother, Sita the true wife, Lakshmana the faithful brother, Hanuman the trusty friend. In this family of ideals Rama rises as ideality itself, exhibiting his virtues as son, husband, brother and king. Thus there came to attach to him a reverence, an awe that lifted him above humanity. (Ingalls; cited in Whaling, 1980: ix)*

One could easily say the same of Sita. Rama and Sita are exemplars in all the roles they take, especially as husband and wife. This role is of utmost importance as it serves as the foundation of family, which in turn forms the basis of society.

#### 4.2.1 Morality and marriage in the *Ramayana*

There have been no other historical or spiritual persons, other than Rama and Sita who demonstrated that marital vows are eternal. It is their steadfast adherence to fidelity, under the most trying circumstances that has served to inspire Hindus to revere marriage, as explained in the following lines:

*The relationship of Rama and Sita constitutes one of the great symbols of the centrality of the marriage bond. Throughout their vicissitudes, there is never any sign that either gives their heart or even their thought to another. Their mutual love and trust has remained an example of the sacredness of husband and wife relationship to Indians down the ages. (Whaling; 1980: 52)*

It has been declared that the test of any relationship lies in the onset of adversities. It is here that relationships prove their strength and sincerity. Marriage is no different. Rama and Sita's marriage has been through many adversities, where they had to function independently, yet firm in fidelity.

Rama's dedication to Sita starts before any adversity, in His "*eka nari vrata*" promise to a monogamous marriage, which is an admirable stance when one looks at Rama's status and family tradition. As the eldest son Rama was entitled to the throne as per tradition. An heir to the throne was regarded as a necessity, even Dasharatha had married three times, however when Rama takes the *eka nari vrata*, He is unaware whether Sita would be able to give rise to an heir or not. But His primary concern is His love and dedication to Her, and nothing else, even if it meant establishing a new tradition.

Although much emphasis is placed on the Raghukula traditions, Rama, being the crest jewel of the race (*Raghukula Siro Mani*) alters traditions that give rise to the disharmony, for example polygamy. His vow of monogamy positively influenced the Indian concept of an ideal marriage, making the set ideal of marriage a monogamous one, and to date this remains unaltered. Rama proves the sincerity of His vow repeatedly throughout the narrative. This can be seen when Rama is approached by Surpanakha in the guise of a beautiful woman, with a marriage proposal, He very firmly turns her away, stating that He is married. Even when Sita is abducted His only goal becomes the recovery of His

wife. When He abandons Sita, (to be discussed later) He remains firm in His resolve to monogamy, and is said to have performed all religious rites with a golden statue of Sita, and did not even think of marrying again.

Rama's "*eka nari vrata*" (vow of monogamy) has been ideally described by Tiwari in the poem "*Eka bara biloku mama ora*" (Appendix D) as:

*Anya rajaon ke bhira men akele,  
Ek patni vrata dhari Rama –  
Sacamuca ramya hain! Adarsa hain!  
Pranamya hai!!!*

*Amongst the throng of kings, Rama stands alone in his  
resolve to monogamy –  
Truly beautiful! Ideal!  
Worthy of respect!!!*

Sita's dedication to her marriage somehow, outshines Rama's. The argument for this is that, although raised in a royal family, and being married into royalty, She does not hesitate in accompanying Rama into exile. It is important to note that the period of exile was asked for Rama only, but as a dedicated wife She insists on accompanying Rama into exile.

Sita is warned about the hardships of the forest life by Kausalya and Rama Himself, but She is resolute about accompanying Her spouse into exile, as She says:



*Tanu dhanu dharani pura raju, pati bihina sabu sokasamaju.  
Life, riches, home, land, city and kingdom - all these are mere  
accoutrements of sorrow to a woman deprived of her husband.  
(Ayodhyakanda; 64: 2)*

Such was the love that Sita had for Rama. She continues to say that her kingdom would be where Rama was, as a husband is the true wealth of a virtuous wife.

Sita's dedication is visible throughout the narrative, especially when held captive by Ravana. Sita was all alone in Lanka, being tormented daily. There was no certainty that Rama would ever find her, but this did not alter Her commitment towards Rama even for a second. It is fascinating how Sita uses Her *patni dharma* (wifely virtue) to protect Herself, using a blade of grass she managed to ward off the mighty Ravana. Sita's strength and devotion in her marriage defeats Ravana, and is beautifully described in the following stanza from Tiwari's poem, *Eka bara biloku mama ora* (Appendix D):

*Anokha drsya tha -  
Manuja-danuja, yaksha-gandharva  
Indra aur Yama ko bhi parajita  
Kar dene vala paurusha  
Sita ke-  
Suci-dampatya ke samane  
Kitana bauna, kitana vivasa tha.*

*It was a peculiar sight-  
Man, demon, nymphs and celestials  
Indra and Yama too, who were defeated  
by this great hero  
remain dwarfed by Sita's wifely virtue.  
How helpless he (Ravana) was.*

Sita did not even award Ravana a glance, which he yearned for so much. This agitated and belittled him to an extent where he was willing to make all his queens, including Mandodari wait on Sita as handmaidens, just for Sita to grant him one glance, as evinced in the following lines:

*Mandodari adi saba rani.  
Tava anucari karaun pana mora, eka bara biloku mama ora.*

*Manadodari and all the other queens - I will make your  
handmaidens, I swear it, if you look at me but once!  
(Sundarakanda; 8: 2-3)*

It is here that Sita gains greater admiration. By merely awarding Ravana that single look, She would have had the chief queen of Lanka as Her servant, but She is not swayed by this, and is brave enough to further belittle Ravana. Sita's refusal to look at Ravana not only showed Her fidelity, but also the respect She has attributed to the institution of marriage as a whole, as elaborated in the poem "*Eka bara biloku mama ora*" by Ramesh Tivari (Appendix D).

This poem speaks of Mandodari's thoughts about Ravana's mentioned proposal, and the insult she has experienced as a wife whose husband courts another woman in her presence. She states that Sita's refusal saved her honour, and how, although being so close to Ravana, she was so distant from him, and how Sita, being separated by an ocean could still be so close to Rama through his *eka nari vrata* (vow to a monogamous marriage), as well as her fidelity.

Imbibing Sita's characteristics would thus imply that no woman should accept proposals from a married man, as this would undermine the lesson taught to us by this episode, and the sacredness of marriage as a whole. These instances clearly show that Rama's glory was solely dependant on Sita's fidelity. Had Sita accepted Ravana's proposals, what would have been left of Rama's glory? Rama would have lost to Ravana without even going to battle. Therefore, it has been said:

*There may be thousand Ramas, but there is only one Sita - purer than purity and symbol of sacrifice... . That is why the Ramayana is known as Sitayah caritam mahat - The glory of Sita! (Swami Vivekananda; undated, cited in Glory of Rama: 19)*

The overall sentiment with regards to marriage, in the Ramayana is one of great respect for its rules. It was expected that men and women respect the institution of marriage. They had to stay faithful, and for all others to honour this relationship, and not to attempt to break it. In fact it is repeatedly stated in the Ramayana that to set one's heart on another's wife is a grave sin, even if it were in a dream, as is said below:

*Raghubansinha kara sahaja subhau, Manu kupantha pagu dharai na kau.  
Mohi atisaya pratiti mana kerī. Jehi sapanehu paranari na heri.*

*Men in the house of Raghu never set their heart on an evil course; that is their nature. As for myself, I am confident of mind, which has never looked on another's wife even in a dream. (Balakanda; 230: 2-3)*

It is interesting to note that the Rakshasas also saw merit in such sentiments as seen in the advice given to Ravana by many, that he is sure to meet his doom as he has set his heart on another's wife. Below is an example in Vibhishana's advise to Ravana.

*Jo apana cahai Kalyana, sujasu sumati subha gati sukha  
nana.*

*So paranari lilara gosai. Tajau cauthi ke canda ki nai.*

*Let him who desires his own welfare and glory, good  
understanding, a good destiny after his death and joys of  
various kinds, turn his eyes away from the face of another's  
wife even as one should refuse to see the moon on the fourth  
night. (Sundarakanda; 37: 2-3)*

Such ideals, demand a strict code of conduct from the men of society, thus revealing that the *Ramayana's* demand on fidelity and restraint are not made on women only, but on men as well. All those that violated the embedded morals that lay in the institution of marriage suffered torment and fatal consequences, such as Ahalya, Bali, and of course Ravana.

Ahalya succumbs to temptation and has an affair with Indra, who was in her husband Gautama's form. Although Indra appeared identical to Gautama, Ahalya was aware that this was not her husband, but in fact Indra. When Gautama finds out about this, he is enraged and curses Indra and Ahalya. Due to the curse Ahalya was turned into stone (a rock) with a conscious mind for centuries, until Rama releases her from the curse.

Bali performed the hideous sin of exiling his brother, Sugriva, and forcefully taking Sugriva's wife as his own. (Establishing an incestuous relationship - to be discussed later.) Bali met the wrath of Rama, and was killed like "an animal".

Ravana, the chief of the villains in the narrative, abducted Sita, and in doing so had himself and the majority of his family destroyed. The Ramayana is didactical and the consequences of disregard for morals and the sanctity of marriage are surely lessons to be imbibed. It is indeed noteworthy that Ravana paid the penalty although he did not succeed in his designs over Sita.

#### **4.2.2 Morality and family life in the *Ramayana***

The narrative exposes three distinct cities at length, namely: Ayodhya, Kishkindha and Lanka. There are conspicuous differences in family dynamics and morality in each. Ayodhya is the most moral, Kishkindha flawed by the acts of Bali, and Lanka, which is steeped in immoral doings. Family is the pivotal part of any society, as it is family members that make society. If we have families steadfast in morals, this will most certainly filter into society.

The *Ramayana* clearly reveals that individuals constitute family, and the actions of these individuals govern the harmony and well being of the family. It is through the numerous examples that lie in the Ramayana that we see that as long as an individual's actions are in accordance with *dharma*, the family's

harmonious survival is almost guaranteed. However, as soon as a member of the family becomes influenced by *adharma* he/she jeopardises the well being of the family life. Kaikeyi's actions reveal this clearly.

Kaikeyi, a once well respected member of the Dasaratha household, is not remembered for her virtue, but her treachery. She is taught to believe, by Manthara, that Dasharatha and Kausalya are conspiring against her and Bharata in installing Rama as king. Kaikeyi's actions henceforth are devoid of all virtue and sentiments of greed and vengeance dictate all her actions. It is Kaikeyi, a single individual, that brings misery to her entire family - in her pursuit of securing the kingdom for Bharata, she separates Rama from those that love Him so dearly, and Dasharatha dies as he is unable to survive the separation from Rama. This incident clearly reveals how our actions have ripple effects on our family members, thus cautioning family members on their actions.

It is rather ironic that Kaikeyi's actions do not merit any form of condonation, or positive justification, yet it is her very actions that award the characters of the *Ramayana* a platform to display their sincerity and love.

#### **4.2.2.1 Brotherly love in the *Ramayana***

Kaikeyi's demands plunge the whole of Ayodhya into a state of grief, and uncertainty, but this uncertainty does not enter the mind of the siblings. The first

display of this is by Rama Himself, when He learns that Kaikeyi wants the throne for Bharata. Rama does not see this demand as denying Him the kingdom, but is ecstatic that Bharata is to inherit it. The material aspect is secondary to family.

Bharata expresses the same kind of love for Rama, when he learns of his mother's wicked plot. Aside from disowning his mother and holding himself responsible for Kaikeyi's actions, he goes out in search of Rama and attempts to bring him back, and only returns after dedicating the kingdom to Rama in Chitrakuta and agreeing to be a caretaker of his brother's sovereignty. Bharata's actions are profound in love, and righteousness. Although he had the consent of all authorities, Vasishtha's, Kausalya's, Dasaratha's word and even Rama's, Bharata chose not to accept the throne, as it rightfully belonged to Rama. Bharata imposed upon himself an exile from all the luxuries of royalty and chose to stay at Nandigrama, a rustic place outside the capital.

Even Lakshmana willingly accompanies Rama into exile without any hesitation or thought of the hardships that may come in the period of exile. Lakshmana is advised by Sumitra, his mother, to accompany Rama and Sita into exile, she also says:

*Tata tumhari matu Baidehi, pita Ramu saba bhanti sanehi.*

*My dear son, Videha's daughter is your mother, and Rama, who loves you most dearly, is your father. (Ayodhyakanda; 73: 2)*

This has established an extremely respectful status for the elder brother in Hindu ideology. The same idea is also expressed by Kaikeyi in the Manthara episode, when she initially attempts to show Manthara that the coronation of Rama is expected and accepted as per tradition:

*Jetha swami sevaka laghu bhai, yaha dinakara riti suhai.*

*The eldest-born should be Lord and the younger one his  
servants: such has ever been the custom in the Solar race.  
(Ayodhyakanda; 14: 2)*

Although brotherly love is stressed, and the status of the elder brother is equated to that of a father, the Ramayana does not perpetuate this ideology throughout the narrative. The respect and status of an elder brother are entirely dependant on his own actions. If his actions are morally sound, he is worthy of that respect, however if he treads an unrighteous path, the younger brother is at liberty to go against his elder brother, provided that the younger is treading a righteous path. This can be seen in the path that Sugriva and Vibhishana took.

In Ayodhya we find the brothers, Rama and Bharata happily handing the throne to each other, but in Kishkindha we see Bali who usurps Sugriva's position and awaits a chance to kill him. Sugriva thus flees Kishkindha, and resides in a mountain, where Bali is unable to enter, due to a curse. Bali not only took all the material belongings of the city, he also took away Sugriva's wife for himself.

Bali's sinful acts are ended when Rama kills him. The manner in which he was killed, is scorned upon by many. Sugriva and Bali are in battle and Rama shoots



him while standing behind a bush. Here Bali himself questions Rama as to whether the manner in which he was killed was conducive to *dharma*. Rama in this answer justifies His actions saying:

*Anujavadhu bhagini sutanari, sunu satha kanya sama e cari.  
Inhahi kudrishti bilokai joi, tahi badhen kachu papa na hoi.*

*Listen o wretch, a younger brother's wife, a sister, a daughter-in-law and one's own daughter are all alike. Whoever looks at these with a lustful eye may be slain without any sin.  
(Kishkindhakanda; 8: 3-4)*

These lines proclaim a death sentence for those who commit the sinful act of incest. The way in which Rama killed Bali is certainly justified against the crime he committed. Rama, who is always regarded as the “*Kripasindhu*” ocean of compassion, shows no compassion for those who commit such acts. In fact Rama repeatedly offers Ravana opportunities to surrender himself, but does not award Bali this opportunity, clearly revealing that those who commit incest are beyond any form of compassion. This entire episode, warns family members of the consequences that follow such sinful acts.

In Lanka, Ravana for his own selfish desires exiles one brother and gets the rest of the males in his family, including himself, killed. Lanka, however, is not devoid of brotherly love as we see it clearly amongst Ravana, Kumbhakarana and Vibhishana. It is Ravana's actions that jeopardise his entire family. Vibhishana is remarkably fond of Ravana, and repeatedly tries to persuade him to give up his immoral desires and save himself from Rama's wrath. His advice

is ridiculed and Vibhishana is kicked in the presence of Ravana's assembly, and is asked to leave Lanka. Even then Vibhishana speaks to Ravana with love and deference. He says:

*Tumha pitu sarisa bhalehi mohi mara.  
You have done well to strike me, for you are like a father to  
me. (Sundarakanda; 40: 4)*

This clearly reveals that even in the *Rakshasas*, the elder brother is equivalent to a father. However Ravana did not act as a father. He was blinded by his own *adharmic* desires. When Vibhishana sees that he cannot alter his brother's evil mindset, he leaves his family. Vibhishana attracts no dishonour for leaving a family devoid of *dharma*, thus prescribing the abandoning of those that are *adharmic*.

Later, when Kumbhakarana is briefed about the happenings in Lanka by Ravana, he recognises Ravana's evil and is certain that he too will be doomed if he is to side with Ravana, but out of brotherly love, he chooses to side with Ravana. Siding with the wrong, deserves no admiration. However, Kumbhakarana was sure of his own doom, but welcomed it just to offer comfort to his brother. In this sense one sees a very selfless person in Kumbhakarna, which is praiseworthy. Kumbhakarana's dialogue with Ravana just before he goes into battle clearly reveals what he thinks of Ravana's actions, yet he sacrifices himself:

*Suni dasakandhara bacana taba Kumbhakarana bilkhana,  
Jagadamba hari ani ab satu cahata kalyana.*

*On hearing Ravana's plaint, Kumbhakarana grieved and said,  
"Having carried off the mother of the world, you fool, you  
still expect good out of it." (Lankakanda; 62)*

#### 4.2.2.2 The parent child relationship in the *Ramayana*

The parent-child relationship is magnificently portrayed in the *Ramayana*. The interdependence of parent and child is repeatedly shown. The *Ramayana's* narrative is mobilised by the yearning of Dasaratha and his queens for a child. Dasharatha and all the queens were overjoyed at the birth of their sons. In fact Kausalya gets to view Rama in his divine form, but this did not please her and she asks him to abandon this form saying:

*Mata puni boli so mati doli tajahu tata yaha rupa,  
Kijai sisulila ati priyasila yaha sukha parama anupa.*

*Again his mother said - for her mind had changed, "Abandon  
this form, dear son! Play those childish games, which are so  
dear to a mother! Such a joy is incomparable" (Balakanda;  
191: Chanda:4)*

The ultimate goal, or the greatest reward that a Hindu could receive, would be to gain vision of God, but to Kausalya even this seemed insignificant to the joy she experiences in viewing her child, clearly revealing the sentiments of love that the *Ramayana* attributes to the parent-child relationship. Even the all powerful Lord is obedient to His mother's wish. All the mothers of the *Ramayana* exhibit great love for their children, and this love was reciprocated

by their children.

It was the love for Bharata that motivated Kaikeyi into her unrighteous demands. Dasharatha dies, as he could not bear the separation from his children; Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. The love for children is not unique to Ayodhya alone. We see sincere parent-child love even in Kishkindha and Lanka.

When Bali is dying, he is concerned about his son Angada, and entrusted his welfare to Rama. Ravana too, loved his sons, and appeared shattered at the death of Meghanada. Meghanada and his brothers died in an attempt to fulfil their father's desire. Again, siding with one's father when he is wrong, is not admirable, but to see the actions of such obedient sons is indeed awe-inspiring.

Rama as an ideal son, is always remembered for his filial piety. He enters exile in order to honour his father's promise. It is interesting to note that Dasharatha did not directly tell Rama what he had promised Kaikeyi. Kaikeyi tells Rama what she has asked for, and Rama perceives the agony of His father and accepts the exile without letting Dasharatha say a word. He does not even harbour any negativity towards Kaikeyi. The *Ramayana* takes us through the vicissitudes of family life, revealing to us that life has its adversities, but it is in those adverse circumstances that family bonds need to emerge victoriously.

#### 4.2.3 Education as depicted in the *Ramayana*

The traditional Indian perception of education has been the acquisition of religious knowledge, and the understanding of one's duty as per religion and caste. This ensured that, *"the whole education atmosphere is pervaded with an ideal of morality, both individual and social, which was the basis on which one would acquire his knowledge."* (Sudha; 1983, cited in *Glory of Rama*, 202) The formal and informal education in the *Ramayana* functioned in promoting such ideology.

##### 4.2.3.1 Formal education in the *Ramayana*

Although there is not much detail about the formal education in the *Ramayana*, much can be inferred from the narrative about the success of such a system. This is clearly evident in the way the heroic characters carry themselves, and the decisions they take are all in keeping with dharma. Looking at Rama, Lakshmana and Bharata, it would be justifiable to say that the education system created *dharmatmas* (righteous souls).

Certain aspects of the education system are clear, like the fact that the *Gurukula* Education System was prevalent in the time of Rama. This system of education required the learner to leave home and reside at the Guru's *asrama*. This tradition even applied to the royal class. This tradition was not compromised,

Rama too went through the same process:

*Gurugrham gae padhana Raghurai, alapa kala bidhya sabaai.  
The Lord of the Raghus then proceeded to His preceptor's  
residence for study and in a short time mastered all the  
branches of knowledge. (Balakanda, 203:2)*

Although it saddened the parents to have their young children away from them, they accepted it and did not interfere with the education of the child. They entrusted their children into the noble care of the Guru.

The Guru taught them all that they needed to know to grow into noble adults. Due to the absence of parents, the Guru and his wife would provide them with the love of parents. The students accorded a divine status to the Guru, which Tulasidasa too followed, as he says:

*Bandaun gurapada kanja krpasindhu nararupa hari.*

*I reverence the lotus feet of my guru, an ocean of grace, Hari  
in human form. (Balakanda; Sorta: 5)*

Although there is no mention of a formal education structure for women, it is certain that women were schooled in the precepts of *dharma* as evinced in the dialogues of the women in the narrative. Examples of this can be seen when Sita puts forth the argument according to *dharma*, as to why as a wife She needs to accompany Her husband into exile. Kausalya, too shows her understanding of providence and *karma*, when she consoles the grieving Bharata.

Even in Mandodari we see a well-educated woman, when she offers advice to Ravana. It is very interesting to note that, as queen, Mandodari took a keen interest in public opinion in Lanka, as it is said in Sundarakanda that she had sent out spies to ascertain the feeling of the masses after Hanuman had ravaged Lanka. The following line reveals this:

*Dutinha sana suni purajana bani, Mandodari adhika akulani.*

*When Mandodari heard from her female spies what the citizens were saying, she was still more disquieted.  
(Sundarakanda; 35: 2)*

#### **4.2.3.2 Informal education in the Ramayana**

The Ramayana gains profound merit from the fact that sharing of knowledge/education was not restricted to the parameters of an institution, or age or class. Learning, sharing of knowledge, takes place throughout the narrative, and evidence of this can be repeatedly cited.

Firstly this is evident when Rama and Lakshmana go help Vishwamitra protect his sacrifice, by destroying the demons. This is followed by Rama and Lakshmana becoming Vishwamitra's students, and they acquire much knowledge and skill from him, although their formal education was completed under the capable Vasishtha.

It is interesting to note that the giver of knowledge was not always a male, elderly, or of one particular caste. Knowledge was shared by anyone who

possessed it, with anyone who was worthy of receiving it, and interestingly enough it was shared orally, and the place was insignificant, be it the palace or the forest. What follows are a few such examples:

Lakshmana shares philosophical knowledge with Guha in *Ayodhyakanda*:

*Bole Lakhana madhura mridu bani, gyana biyoga bhagati  
rasa sani.  
Kahu na kohu sukha dukha kara data, nij krita karama  
bhoga sabu bhrata.  
Joga biyoga bhoga bhala manda, hita anahita madhyama  
bhrama phanda.  
Janamu maranu jahan lagi jaga jalu, sampati bipati karamu  
aru kalu.  
Dharani dhamu dhanu pura parivaru, saragu naraku jahan  
lagi byavaharu.  
Dekia sunia gunia mana mahin, moha mula paramarthu  
nahin.*

*Lakshmana spoke to him sweet and gentle words imbued with the nectar of wisdom, dispassion and devotion: "No one is a source of delight and pain to another; everyone reaps the fruit of one's own actions, brother. Union and separation, pleasure and painful experiences, friends, foes and neutrals – snares of delusion are these. Even so birth and death, prosperity and adversity, destiny and time are all the illusion of the world; lands, houses, wealth, town and family, heaven and hell, and all the phenomena of the world; nay, whatever is seen, heard or thought with the mind has its roots in ignorance: nothing exists in reality. (Ayodhyakanda, 91: 2-4)*

We see Anusuya give knowledge to Sita on wifely duties, in *Aranyakanda*, 4: 2-10.

Example of this would be:



*Uttama ke asa basa mana mahin, sapanehun ana purusha  
jaga nahin.*

*A woman of the best type is convinced in her heart of hearts  
that she cannot even dream in the world other than her  
husband. (Aranyakanda, 4:6)*

Rama gives the most profound knowledge on *bhakti*, to Sabari, in *Aranyakanda*,  
34: 4 to 35: 1 – 7) as illustrated below.

*The first form of devotion is the fellowship with saints. The  
second is the fondness for the stories of Sri Rama. The third  
form is the humble service to one's preceptor. The fourth form  
is the humble singing of Sri Rama's praises. The fifth form of  
devotion is the muttering of Rama Nama with unwavering  
faith. The sixth is the practice of self control and virtue,  
desisting from manifold activities and ever pursuing the  
course of conduct prescribed by saints. The seventh form of  
devotion is to look at the world full of Rama, and to view the  
saints as being greater than Rama. The eighth form is to  
remain content with whatever one gets and not to see the  
faults of others even in a dream. The ninth form of devotion  
demands that one should be guileless and straight in one's  
dealings with everybody, and cherish Rama in one's heart.  
Anyone (man or woman) who possesses even just one of these  
forms of devotion is extremely dear to Sri Rama.  
(Uttarakanda, 34: 4 and 35: 1-4)*

He later explains the distinction of a *santa* from an *asanta* to Bharata in  
*Uttarakanda*, 36 – 46, an example of this is revealed below:

*Santa asantanhi kai asi karani, jimi kuthara candana  
acarani.*

*Katai parasu malaya sunu bhai, nija guna dei sugandha  
basai.*

*The conduct of a saint and sinner is analogous to that of the  
sandal tree and the axe, but the fragrant sandal imparts its  
perfume to the very axe that fells it. (Uttarakanda, 36:4)*

*Ta ten sura sisanha cadata jagaballabha srikhanda,  
Anala dahi pitata ghanahin parasu badanu yaha danda.  
For this reason sandal finds its way to the Gods (their  
images) and is the desire of the world too, while the axe, for  
its punishment, has its steel edge heated in the fire and beaten  
with a hammer. (Uttarakanda, 37)*

#### 4.2.4 Ramayana and its promotion of an unprejudice society

Although many scholars find the Ramayana to be promoting gender and caste prejudice on the basis of some episodes, this is not so if one looks at the entire narrative. On the contrary the Ramayana negates any form of prejudice in the form of gender, caste and even race. The only form of discrimination is seen in the *santa* and *asanta* - the good and the bad. The natural question that arises is, if one claims that the Ramayana promotes a non-prejudiced society, what are such instances doing in the Ramayana. To answer this one can very aptly quote Tulasidasa:

*Jada cetana guna dosha maya biswa kinha karatara,  
santa hansa guna gahahin paya parihari bari bikara.  
God has created the universe consisting of animate and  
inanimate beings as partaking of both good and evil; saints  
like the swans imbibe the milk of goodness, rejecting water in  
the form of evil. ( Ayodhyakanda; 6)*

The above lines put the burden of choice onto the individual. If one looks at these lines as a message from Tulasidasa, (as the entire *Ramacaritamanasa* is indeed a message to the reader) it becomes clear that if we aspire towards good then we should imbibe the good from the *Ramacaritamanasa* and reject the bad.

This should be an involuntary action as no one reads the *Ramayana* and aspires to become a Ravana. The good always has greater appeal. Thus if we see an instance that promotes prejudices, we should be like those swans that Tulasidasa spoke of and reject it.

This is only one argument to prove that the few “prejudice promoting instances” are in reality not meant to promote prejudice, but to eradicate it. The other very plausible argument is that Tulasidasa wrote for the masses, and he needed to ensure that the general beliefs, positive and negative, of the masses were reflected in the narrative. Thus his text would receive the acceptance of the masses, and only by incorporating such ideology, he was able to eradicate some of the beliefs, and promote others.

A good example of this would be preceding the Sabari incident, where Rama says to Kabandha:

*Srapata tadata parusha kahanta, bipra pujiya asa gavahin  
santa.*

*Pujia bipra sila guna hina, sudra na gunagana gyana prabina.*

*A brahman, even though he curses you and beat you and use  
harsh words to you, is still an object of reverence - so say the  
saints. A brahman must be revered though he be devoid of  
amiability and virtue, not so a Shudra, however distinguished  
for all virtue and learning. (Aranyakanda; 33: 1)*

In the very same quatrain, Sabari is introduced. Sabari, a woman of low birth, has Rama visit her, and even eat at her little cottage. We see Rama exhibit great

love and respect to Sabari. Sabari points out to Rama, her status as per society's classification, by saying:

*Kehi bidhi astuti karaun tumhari, adhama jati main  
jadamati bhari.  
Adhama ten adhama adhama ati nari, tinha mahan main  
matimanda aghari.*

*How can I hymn your praises? I am a woman of mean descent  
and of dullest wit; of those who are lowest of low, women are  
lower still, O Destroyer of sin! (Aranyakanda; 34: 1-2)*

In response to this, Rama repudiates all what she has said by proclaiming:

*Kaha Raghupati sunu bhamini bata, manaun eka bhagati  
kara nata.  
Jati panti kula dharma badai, dhana bala parijana guna  
caturai.  
Bhagatihina nara sohai kaisa, binu jala barida dekhia jaisa.*

*Listen, O good lady, to My words: I recognise no other  
kinship except that of Devotion, Despite caste, kinship,  
lineage, piety, reputation, wealth, physical strength,  
numerical strength of his family, accomplishments and  
ability, a man lacking in Devotion; is no more than a cloud  
without water.(Aranyakanda; 34: 2 )*

Here it is clearly stated that in the eyes of God there is no discrimination, so humans should not discriminate. The two incidents discussed above, would accord a respected status to the Brahmins as well as the lower castes. Neither would want to negate the dicta of the *Ramacaritamanasa*, as it would jeopardise their own status. Thus if one accepts one, he/she would have to accept the other. For some reason if conflict had to arise about such issues, Tulasidasa has made a statement that supersedes all of this, and that is:

*Siya ramamaya saba jaga jani.karaun pranama jori juga  
pani.*

*Recognising the entire creation as full of Sita and Rama, I  
make obeisance to them with joined palms. (Balakanda; 7: 1)*

Thus if the whole world is infused with Sita and Rama, everything needs to be accorded love and respect, and discrimination of any sort, would mean a discrimination against God. It is important to add that the use of *Siyarama* also negates any gender bias that may exist in our perception of the Absolute.

Rama's deeds clearly reveal that He looked upon all beings equally. A very conspicuous episode is where Rama performed all the death rites for Jatayu, a gigantic bird, as if it were His own father.

Rama and the *"fourteen years of his exile are particularly marked by his association with the common people, most of them living in forests."* (Singh; undated, cited in *Sri Ramacaritamanasa*: 726) It is here that Rama teaches us by example that there should be no discrimination on the basis of birth. His association with Guha, Kevata, Vibhishana and the host of monkeys are clear indication of this.

Guha is wary not to transgress the socially accepted limits, keeping a distance from Rama, Bharata and Vasishtha. They all reject this antisocial norm, by not only going close to him, but by embracing him.

Sita's history also serves as a basis to negate any stereotyped prejudice. A

woman who is regarded as the mother of the world and revered by all Hindus has no birth identity, except that she was found in the earth. The idea of a non-prejudiced society is also reflected in *Ramarajya*, the state of ideal governance where all beings lived in perfect harmony.

#### 4.2.5 *Ramayana* and ideals in governance

Ideals of the highest degree in governance are seen in *Ramarajya*. These ideals are extended to the whole universe (*Ramarajya baithe trailoka*), but are detailed in the governance of Ayodhya, and throughout the *Ramayana* in the actions of Rama. In fact one can see the course of Rama's life in the narrative as a realistic yet ideal example of social cohesion and human solidarity. Rama's journey in the narrative shows a move from the luxuries of the palace to the harshness of the forest, but throughout the narrative Rama remains majestic in His observance of *dharma*, and it is this observance of *dharma*, that makes *Ramarajya* achievable as explained below:

*Raghavascapi dharmatma prapta rajyam annuttamam - indicating that the first condition of Ramarajya is that the king should be a dharmatma. (Sankarcharya; 1972, cited in Glory of Rama, 109)*

#### 4.2.5.1 Governance in Ayodhya prior to Ramarajya

Even prior to *Ramarajya*, one sees excellent and democratic rule in Ayodhya as evidenced in many incidents. All joys of the palace were shared with the people, like the birth of the sons and the marriage of the princes. Even when Dasharatha decides to vacate the throne in favour of Rama, he is wary of Rama's disposition and His relationship with the people as revealed in the following dialogue between Dasharatha and Vasistha.

*Kahai bhualu suniyan muninayka, bhaye Ramu saba bidhi saba layaka.*

*Sevaka saciva sakala purabasi, je hamare ari mitra udasi.*

*Sabahi Ramu priya jehi bidhi mohi.*

*Listen, O chief of sages, said the king. Rama is now perfect in every accomplishment. Servants and ministers and the whole body of citizens whether they be my enemies or friends or neither, hold Rama as dear as I do. (Ayodhyakanda; 2: 1-2)*

In the consultation with Vasistha, it becomes evident that Ayodhya was not governed as an autocracy. Dasaratha's cognisance of how the people perceived Rama, revealed the importance of mass acceptance of the ruler, it also reveals that for one to take over the reigns of kingship, he or she should possess the merit, as expressed above "*Rama is now perfect in every accomplishment.*" The preceding explanation may seem trivial, but it is not so, as it was the tradition of the *Raghukulas* for the eldest to be the lord and for the younger brothers to serve the elder.

As per tradition Dasharatha could have declared Rama as the next king and all would be obliged to accept this decision, but he does no such thing. He consults with the royal priest, ministers and the people, and only on receiving a unanimous acceptance, does he proceed with his plan. Dasharatha knew that a ruler's duty was to maintain harmony amongst the masses, and this could only be done by installing a king that was accepted by the masses. This ideology was disrupted by Kaikeyi's demands to name Bharata as king of Ayodhya.

Kaikeyi's decision to ask for a fourteen-year exile for Rama is quite confusing, if one does not read into the thinking behind it. Kaikeyi knew that Ayodhya was truly democratic, and ironically, she too must have been aware of the power of the people. Although she had secured the kingdom for Bharata in her first demand, the people's choice would still be Rama. There was a possibility that the people would have revolted against Bharata, and forcefully anointed Rama as king. This would not happen if Rama left Ayodhya. This period of exile would afford Bharata an opportunity to win the confidence of the people as a ruler. Due to these unrighteous demands of Kaikeyi, Dasaratha's rule is distinguished from that of Rama's *Ramarajya*.

#### **4.2.5.2 *Ramarajya* and fidelity**

*Ramarajya* was an uninterrupted righteous rule, where sentiments, values and resolves held dear by Rama, became the norm of the nation. One such example



would be the “eka nari vrata” which Rama took, which was willingly imbibed by the men of Ayodhya, and Sita’s strong stance in her fidelity was reflected in the lives of the women of the nation, as seen in the following lines.

*Ekanari brata rata saba jhari, te mana bacana krama pati hitakari.*

*Every husband was pledged to a vow of monogamy, and wives too were devoted to their husbands in thought, word and deed. (Uttarakanda; 21:8)*

Sitaram describes fidelity in *Ramarajya* as:

*Important aspects of Ramarajya were marital fidelity and sexual morality, which are indeed very significant for humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Tulasidasa has presented a picture of an ideal society peopled by men and women devoted to each other and dedicated to the nurturing of society in the best possible ways. Monogamy and fidelity were the backbone of this Ramarajya. (Sitaram, 2001: 1)*

Such sentiments of fidelity as seen in *Ramarajya*, and as expressed above ‘are indeed very significant ‘ and extremely beneficial for today’s world. The November 2002 edition of *Nursing Update*, reports on statistics on the AIDS pandemic in Uganda, and its admirable decrease. It reports that Uganda has achieved success in lowering the “*infection rate from 30% in 1986 to 6,1% in 2002.*” Where the rest of the world is experimenting on means of curbing the problem, Uganda’s success is said to be that aside from the awareness campaign, “*the president and all leaders encourage faithfulness and fidelity in marriage.*” (*Nursing Update*, 2002: 31) Reverting to the basics of a moral life is stressed by the leader, which has been described as a “shining

example of leadership,” for which the President, Yoweri Musaweni received the Commonwealth Award in March 2002.

#### 4.2.5.3 Sacrifice of self interest as a leader in the *Ramayana*

*Ramarajya* boasts another fascinating facet in leadership qualities, and that is the ability to sacrifice self-interest, in order to ensure harmony and *dharma* amongst the subjects. The two most visible examples of this can be seen in the abandoning of Sita and pronouncing of the death sentence upon Lakshmana.

In the entire narrative the two incidents that show Rama overcome by grief are the abduction and separation from Sita and when Lakshmana is wounded during the war. On merely hearing an account of the hardships that Sita has been enduring in her stay at Lanka by Hanuman, Rama is reduced to tears as described below:

*Suni Sitadukha prabhu mukha ayana, bhari ae jalarajiva  
nayana.*

*Upon hearing of Sita's woes, the lotus eyes of the Lord, the  
abode of bliss, filled with tears. (Sundarakanda; 31: 1)*

The same emotions of grief are again seen in Rama in Lankakanda, when Lakshmana is wounded by Meghanada, and is lying unconscious, Rama says:

*Jau janateun bana bandhubichohu, pitabacana manateun  
nahi ohu.*

*Had I known that I should lose my brother in the forest, I  
should never have obeyed my father's command.  
(Lankakanda; 60 kha: 6)*

It is only here in the entire *Ramayana* that Rama speaks of disregarding His father's command, due to His love for Lakshmana. Obeying His father's command was regarded as part of Rama's *dharma*, yet the *Dharmatma* speaks of possible repudiation of His *dharma*. In the *Ramacaritamansa* Sri Rama gives way to human emotion momentarily, as his avatara was 'nara-lila'. The mentioned incidents clearly reveal how much Sita and Lakshmana meant to Rama, yet as a righteous king He had to forsake them. These instances show that morality is beyond negotiation, especially for rulers, as rulers need to govern their countries with a sincere sense of public duty.

The incidents leading up to Sita's banishment reveal how Rama respected public opinion, and the status He accorded His subjects. An ordinary "washerman" could comment on the queen's character following Her long stay in Lanka, and his view was given severe attention by the king. Although the comments on Sita's character were not just, it is surprising to note that the man spoke without fear, revealing the freedom of speech accorded to the subjects.

There were no doubts in Rama's mind about Sita's purity, as He witnessed the *agni pariksha* (the fire ordeal), where Sita's innocence was proved, yet He does not impose this view on His subjects, as they saw Sita as tainted. It is important to note that Rama did not abandon Sita out of fear for public scandal, but to uphold His *dharma* as king, where the people are to be put first. His was a reign where class or caste restricted no one from expressing their views. Had Rama

not sacrificed His love, He would be accused of manipulating *dharma* to suit Himself. Singh correctly says of Rama:

*Rama though a prince by birth and position was a man of the people and he worked for the people. (Singh; undated, cited in Sri Ramacaritamanasa: 726)*

#### 4.2.5.4 Ramarajya: A non prejudice rule

*Ramarajya* was a rule where there was no caste or class discrimination, a period where people lived without any prejudices. It is said that the term “difference” ceased to exist in this period, except in relation to music and dance, as revealed in the lines to follow:

*Danda jatinha kara bheda jahan nartaka nrtya samaja,  
Jitahu manahin sunihin sunia asa Ramacandra ken raja.  
'Danda' was never seen save in the hands of the recluse and  
'Bheda' too had ceased to exist except among the dancers in a  
dancing party. Even 'Conquer!' was heard only with reference  
to the mind throughout the realm of Sri Ramacandra.  
(Uttarakanda; 22)*

In such a rule the best was shared with the people, irrespective of their caste, and not reserved for royalty only. One outstanding example concerns the royal *ghata*, where it is said:

*Rajaghata saba bidhi sundara bara, majjahin vahan barana  
cariu nara.  
The best of all and beautiful in every way was the royal ghat,  
where men of all the four castes could bathe. (Uttarakanda;  
28: 1)*

Such democratic values are indeed inspiring. In South Africa's apartheid regime, the best of the recreational facilities were retained for the ruling class only. The advent of democracy has begun to change the situation.

#### **4.2.5.5 Ramarajya: A state of perfect harmony**

The primary concern of any ruler should be to ensure the welfare and happiness of the people. She/he must make every effort to ensure that harmony prevails, which can only be achieved through the promotion of *dharma* or righteous values based on Human Rights and morality. This was easy for Rama to achieve as He promoted *dharma* by example, and not just as a theoretical doctrine. There is no other era documented in the history of man, aside from *Ramarajya*, where the people of a nation enjoyed uninterrupted harmony and happiness.

The happiness that existed in the lives of the people under Rama's reign has been unparalleled. Every facet of their lives was adequately provided for. There was no animosity towards any being because no one lacked anything. It was a period where sentiments of peace, love, righteousness, and all other virtuous characteristics manifested themselves in the people of *Ramarajya* as seen in the following lines:

*In the whole of Sri Rama's dominions there was none who suffered from any afflictions of any kind - whether of the body, or proceeding from divine or supernatural agencies or that caused by another living being. All men loved one*

*another; each followed one's prescribed duty, conforming to the precepts of the Vedas.*

*There was no premature death nor suffering of any kind; everyone was comely and of sound body. No one was destitute, afflicted or miserable; no one was stupid or devoid of auspicious marks. All were unaffectedly good, pious and virtuous; all were clever and accomplished - both men and women. Everyone recognised the merits of others and was learned and wise; nay, everyone acknowledged the services and the benefits received from others and there was no guileful prudence. (Uttarakanda; 20: 1-4)*

It was not only the humans who were under the righteous sway of Rama's reign, but nature as well.

*Phulahin pharahin sada taru kanana, rahahin eka sanga gaja pancanana.*

*Khaga mriga sahaja bayaru bisarai, sabanha paraspara priti badai.*

*Trees in the forest blossomed and bore fruit throughout the year; the elephant and the lion lived together as friends. Nay, birds and beast of every description had forgotten their natural animosities and developed friendly relations with one another. (Uttarakanda; 22: 1)*

Such descriptions of *Ramarajya*, made it the ideal that Mahatma Gandhi wished to achieve for India. *Ramarajya*, truly remains unparalleled throughout the world, and time. Frank Whaling says of *Ramarajya*:

*Ramarajya is an ideal kingdom on earth. The nearest Christian equivalent would be the Kingdom of God on earth. (Whaling; 1980: 69)*

#### 4.2.6 Morality and war in the *Ramayana*

In recent years, war has ravaged the lives of many “civilised” nations. In the *Ramayana* too, war was waged, but the negativity of war was highlighted, as it was the last resort in resolving issues of conflict. When one recalls the incidents preceding the war in Lanka, one would note that the two envoys, Hanuman and Angada, sent by Rama to Ravana had explained to Ravana that he should return Sita to Rama and save his country and people from the devastation of war. Ravana’s arrogance deafens him to such advice, thus the war became the only avenue to resolve the issue.

When the war was waged, it was conducted according to strict code of conduct. The most significant point worthy of mentioning is that the civilians were not harmed. This is so different from our contemporary wars, where children are not even spared from the madness of war. In keeping with this principle of not attacking civilians as they were unarmed, an unarmed soldier was not attacked.

There were also strict time constraints on the period of battle. War was only fought during the day - (sunrise to sunset). This act in itself shows how sensitive and understanding such a society was, the night served as a period for soldiers to recover from the stresses and fatigue of the day. Such a system shows immense respect for life. The present era when weapons of mass destruction are deployed, shows the erosion of differences between combatants and non-

combatants.

As mentioned earlier, war was always waged as a last resort over moral issues by the pious and not territorial expansion. This is seen when Rama promises the kingdom of Kishkindha to Sugirva, even before He kills Bali, and He anoints Vibhishana as the king of Lanka even before He sets feet on Lanka. These acts clearly prove that Rama had no interest in usurping land or wealth, His sole purpose was to uphold and restore *dharma*, as explained below:

*The coronation of Sugriva in Kishkindha and Vibhishana in Lanka is conceived as the establishment of dharma in a place of adharma, (Whaling; 1980: 68)*

It is absolutely clear that the entire *Ramayana* prescribes true happiness across every facet of life through the observance of *dharma*. It demands that individuals be firm on the principles of morality in every situation they find themselves in, as morality is beyond compromise. This chapter illustrated how the narrative of the *Ramayana* has numerous lessons for our everyday living. These lessons can only be gained if members of society look towards the *Ramayana* for moral guidance.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The *Ramayana* depicts the observance of *dharma* in the loftiest forms across all social institutions, as illustrated in the preceding chapter. The *Ramayana* not only gives expression to all social institutions and their ideals, but almost every human emotion, making it very relevant for contemporary society. The *Ramayana* certainly has the ability to inspire masses to lead a moral and spiritual life, however this can only be achieved if the masses look towards the text for moral education.

The moral climate of society is in a state of neglect and total disregard in some instances. This has been revealed in the variety of social problems described in Chapters Two and Three. To address this situation, and prevent it from worsening an immediate remedy is necessary. The *Ramayana* certainly can serve as the remedy as it has the potential to bring about moral transformation. The *Ramayana* and its dicta with regard to morality are not well known in society (as evidenced in the feedback of respondents in Chapter Three) and all the gems that lie within the covers of the *Ramayana* do not reach the innermost minds of the masses. It is only within the mind that moral transformation can be initiated.

The hypothesis that governed this study is that the *Ramayana* and its moral

implications are neglected at present and this is largely the reason why the Hindi community is, like the rest of society in a state of moral regression.

Although the *Ramayana* has the ability to ennoble society at large, it would first have to start with that part of society that is familiar with the text, namely the Hindu community. This, however, is not being done. There are many reasons as to why the *Ramayana* is neglected although it is regarded as scripture. To analyse the reasons as to why the *Ramayana* is so relegated may warrant a full research study, but a few reasons would be explained.

One of the reasons for the *Ramayana's* relegation may be the fact that there exists a variety of Hindu Scriptures, and it is difficult to prioritise what should be read, although the *Ramayana* has been said to encapsulate the essence of the Vedas. The other very significant reason is the fact that Hinduism is not prescriptive with regard to the reading of scripture, unlike other religions where scripture is taught at an early age. The neglect of mother tongue in the Hindu community is another reason why the *Ramayana* and its wealth of knowledge remain unknown to many.

The *Ramayana* is also neglected because it does not enjoy academic status in our society outside the disciplines of Indian languages. The status of Hindi, like other Indian languages, is also very neglected, as the “modern South African Indian” wants very little to do with his/her mother tongue. Evidence of this can

be seen in the fact that the only tertiary institution on the continent of Africa, University of Durban Westville, that offered Indian languages as academic disciplines, had to abolish the courses at undergraduate level as the student intake for such courses was very small. In this way, the academic status of the *Ramayana* has been diminished.

Another, yet very significant reason for the neglect of the *Ramayana* may be attributed to the strength of the oral tradition. Most people are exposed to the *Ramayana* via the oral tradition, this merely covers a very simple narrative neglecting its higher moral implications. Thus many people do not believe they need to read the text, consequently they remain ignorant of the ethical-philosophical aspects of the *Ramayana*, which has been evidenced in the response of respondents.

To postulate that a book may have the ability to impact on society's moral climate may appear to be over-ambitious, but it is indeed possible. The Tulasi *Ramayana* has fulfilled this need in the past as documented in the History of Hindi Literature. The *Ramayana* was written in a period of social suffering and despair was rife in the Hindu community (sixteenth century). The text was able to renew faith in the divine, offer a sense of comfort and security, and set forth standard of decorum. The *Ramayana* has since impacted on all Indian literary genres.

The *Ramayana* needs greater exposure in society for it to be able to bring about change. This can be achieved in many ways. The first and most important would be for religious bodies and organisations to set up *Ramayana* classes. Although discourses on the *Ramayana* are run at many religious organisations, these discourses are limited to the periods like *Ramayana* week and Deepavali. Very few organisations run discourses on the *Ramayana* regularly. The *Ramayana Mandalis* are foremost amongst them.

Although it is not necessary for one to know Hindi to understand and appreciate the immense moral lessons that lie in the *Ramayana* as good translations of the text exist, nevertheless it would certainly enhance the understanding of the *Ramayana*. Therefore parents need to stress the study of the mother tongue languages in schools.

The *Ramayana* perpetuates a God loving ideology, and if we teach young children to fill their hearts with the love for God they would take very easily to the dictates of the *Ramayana*. The planned introduction of Religious Education Studies in all South African Schools from 2006 provides an excellent opportunity to promote the values of the *Ramayana*, together with other Hindu texts, in the Hinduism component of the programme.

Murari Bapu, a great exponent of the *Ramayana*, in his rendition of *Rama Katha* in the London, 2003, very aptly stated that when one journeys through the seven

*Kandas*(chapters) of the *Ramayana* he/she becomes human. A redefinition of the term 'human' is established, and that is not just a biological classification, but a moral, compassionate and God loving person. Murari Bapu claims that the *Ramayana* socialises and educates one on becoming 'manava'(human). Tulasidasa's last lines in the *Ramacaritamanasa* reveal a very similar sentiment with regard to the impact of the narrative on the reader:

*Punyam papaharam sada sivakaram visanabhaktipradam  
Mayamohamalapaham suvimalam premambupuram subham  
Sriadramacaritramanasamidam bhaktyavagahanti the  
Te sansarapatangahorakiranairdahyanti no manavah.*

*This Holy Lake of Rama's Acts is a lake of merit, a lake that  
destroys all defilements and ever blesses the soul and grants  
wisdom and faith, washing away the filth of ignorance and  
illusion by its pure, clear waters brimful with love. Those  
who plunge with faith into it are never burnt by the scorching  
rays of the sun of birth and death. (Uttarakanda, sloka 2)*

One of the many factors that inspire individuals to emulate, love and worship Rama, is the way he is portrayed. Rama reflects humanity, His actions define humanity and in Him we understand what is required for us to be human. His character and actions are illustrious, yet He mingles affectionately with characters from all walks of life, and that is what makes him belong to all of humanity, and for all to be able to claim authority over Him and profess that "Rama is mine".

## APPENDIX A

### SECTION A

Name: \_\_\_\_\_(OPTIONAL)

Residential Area: \_\_\_\_\_(PLEASE INDICATE)  
(PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BLOCKS!)

1. What age group do you belong to?

15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+

2. Please state your occupation!

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Sex

Male	
Female	

4. Marital status

Single	
Married	
Divorced	
Widowed	

5. Describe your knowledge of Hindi.

No understanding of Hindi	
Understand simple Hindi	
Understand and speak simple Hindi	
Understand, speak, read and write simple Hindi	

6. Do you have any qualification in Hindi?

Yes	
No	

7. If yes in (6), please state. Eg. Std 10 \_\_\_\_\_

8. Through which institution did you obtain your qualification?

Government school	
Hindi Shiksha Sangh	
Religious organisation	
University	
Other (Please specify Below!)	

\_\_\_\_\_

9. To which religious group do you belong?

Sanathan	
Arya Samaj	
Other – Please specify!	

10. Are you a member of any religious body/organisation?

Yes	
No	

10.1. If yes, please state name of body/organisation.

10.2. Does this body subscribe to the Rama worship, or the scriptural status of the Ramayana?

Yes	
No	

10.3. How often does this body/organisation run discourses on the Ramayana?

Weekly	
Monthly	
Only during Rama Naumi an Diwali	
Not at all	

SECTION B

1. Do you know anything about the Ramayana?

Yes	
No	

(If yes, please answer the questions that follow.)

2. How were you first introduced to the Ramayana?

Read the text	
Was told about it by elders	
Watched Ramanand Sagar's Ramayana on television	
Watched movies about it	

3. Have you now read the Ramayana?

Yes	
No	

4. What do you regard the Ramayana as?

Scripture	
History	
Mythology	
Purely fiction	

5. How do you view Rama and Sita?

Divine	
Ordinary	

Please explain your answer?

---

---

---

6. How do you view Hanuman in his relationship with Rama and other characters?

---

---



7. Beside those already mentioned, which character do you admire the most? Why?

---

---

---

8. What is your favourite part of the Ramayana, and why?

---

---

9. What are the moral lessons you have learnt from the Ramayana

---

---

10. How does morality/dharma feature in the lives of the heroic characters in the Ramayana?

---

---

---

11. Family is important in every society. It is important that these relationships be nurtured and respected. How does the Ramayana portray family relationships with regard to dharma/morality?

---

---

---

12. How does the Ramayana encourage social cohesion/ solidarity/ unity?

---

---

13. Has the exposure to the Ramayana helped you lead a more dharmic/moral life?

Yes	
No	
Not sure	

Please explain your answer.

---

---

14. If you were exposed to the Ramayana earlier in your life, would it have impacted on your life then?

---

---

15. What do you know about the educational matters mentioned in the Ramayana with regard to the following.

15.1. Childhood of the four brothers and their education.

---

---

15.2. The role of the preceptor/guru in one's life.

---

---

15.3. How people in the Ramayana are given knowledge of important issues?

---

---

---

## SECTION C

1. What do you consider as the greatest problem/s in society?

---



---

2. What is the present status of morality in society?

---



---

3. What is the Ramayana's stance on the following issues?

ISSUE	ACCEPTED	NOT ACCEPTED	PLEASE ELABOURATE
Marital infidelity			<hr/> <hr/>
Polygamy			<hr/> <hr/>
Abuse of spouse			<hr/> <hr/>
Rape			<hr/> <hr/>
Incest			<hr/> <hr/>
Child abuse			<hr/> <hr/>

3. What is the role of the individual in society?

---



---

4. Do you see the Ramayana as having any remedies to society's evils?

Yes	
No	

Please explain.

---

---

5. When should one be exposed to the Ramayana?

As early as possible during childhood	
At school	
In one's teens	
As young adults	
Not necessary to be exposed to the it	

6. What have you learnt from the helps you in every life?

---

---

---

7. Do you believe that the Ramayana is morally and spiritually educating?

Yes	
No	

Please explain.

---

---

---

8. Who should be responsible for the moral and spiritual education of the child?

Home	
School	
Religious institutions	
All of the above	
All of the above especially home	

10. Is it at all possible to lead a moral life in today's world?

Yes	
No	

Please explain your answer.

---

---

---

11. Do you believe that Ramayana can bring about a change in morally in society?

Yes	
No	

Please explain your answer.

---

---

12. How can Ramayana be made more accessible to people?

---

---

13. Do you believe that the teachings of the Ramayana can assist those outside the Hindu Society?

Yes	
No	

Please explain.

---

---

---

THE END  
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR KIND CO-OPERATION!

**APENDIX B**  
**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. Name of interviewee.
2. Age of interviewee.
3. Address
4. Occupation of interviewee.
5. Marital status of interviewee.
6. Describe your knowledge of Hindi.
7. Do you have any qualification in Hindi?
8. Through which institution did you obtain your qualification?
9. To which religious group do you belong? eg. Sanathanist, Arya Samaj, etc.
10. Are you a member of any religious body/organisation?
11. Does this body/organisation subscribe to Rama worship and the scriptural status of the Ramayana?
12. Do you know anything about the Ramayana?
13. How were you first introduced to the Ramayana?
14. Have you now read the Ramayana?
15. What do you regard the Ramayana as?
16. How do you view the characters of Rama and Sita?
17. Which characteristics of Rama and Sita do you find most admirable?
18. How do you view Hanuman in his relationship with Rama and other charaters?

19. Aside from Rama, Sita and Hanuman, which character do you admire, and why?
20. Which is your favourite part of the Ramayana and why?
21. How has the Ramayana impacted on your life?
22. What are your views of the moral status of the Ramayana?
23. What is the status of morality with regard to family life in the Ramayana?
24. How does Ramayana encourage/ emphasize social cohesion / solidarity/ unity?
25. Has the exposure to the Ramayana helped you lead a more dharmic life?
26. If you were exposed to the Ramayana earlier in your life, would it have impacted on your life?
27. What do you know about educational matters in the Ramayana, with regard to:
- A. Childhood of Rama and his brothers.
  - B. The role of the preceptor/ guru in one's life.
  - C. How people in the Ramayana are given knowledge of important issues in the Ramayana?
28. What is the status of morality in present society?
29. What do you regard as the greatest problem in society?
30. What do you believe is the cause of such problems?
31. Do you hear of the following instances in the Hindu community?
- A. Theft

B. Murder

C. Rape

D. Child abuse

E. Abuse of spouse

F. Incest

G. Adultery

32. What is the Ramayana's stance about the above issue?

33. Can you cite parts from the Ramayana that clearly show its stance on it?

34. Do you believe that if one is exposed to the Ramayana, he/she would be inspired to lead a moral/dharmic life?

35. Do you see the Ramayana as having any remedies to society's evils?

36. When should one be exposed to the Ramayana?

37. Who should be involved in the spiritual and moral education of the child?

38. When should one be exposed to the Ramayana?

39. Is it possible to lead a moral life in today's world?

40. Do you believe that the Ramayana can bring about change in the morality of society?

41. How can the Ramayana be made more accessible to people?

42. Do you believe that the Ramayana can help those outside the Hindu community?



## APPENDIX C

### MAY IT PLEASE LORD RAMA *Professor Srisurang Poolthupya (Thailand)*

*Why do you worship me?  
In this capitalist age  
Gold should be your God.*

*May it please Lord Rama,  
Try not my devoted soul;  
I have known how Sita,  
Turning her thoughts to the golden deer,  
Came under the evil power of Ravana  
And lost you for many years.*

*Why do you worship me?  
In this nuclear age  
You should worship nuclear power.*

*May it please Lord Rama,  
Try not my unwavering soul;  
I have known how mighty Kumbhakarna,  
Indrajita and Ravana fell  
Because they did not believe  
In your divine power.*

*Why do you worship me?  
In this age of equality  
Each man is his own god.*

*May it please Lord Rama,  
Try not my humble soul;  
I have known how valiant Hanuman,  
Stalwart Sugriva  
And august Vibhishana  
Worshipped you and served you.*

*Why do you worship me?  
In this age of incessant wars  
People fight in the name of religion, race or class.*

*May it please Lord Rama,  
All the more reason I should seek you  
To grant me the strength to fight evil  
With my two hands and one head,  
For I have known how you fought  
And killed the ten-headed,  
Twenty-handed Ravana  
In your frail human form.*

## APPENDIX D

### *Eka bara biloku mama ora (Mandodari ka manastapa) Professor Ramesh Tiwari 'Virama'*

Apana swatva khokara abhi-abhi  
Lauti hun 'Asoka -Vatika' se-  
Kitani apamanita, lanchita aur  
Pratadita hun mein!  
Hridaya - agni-kunda - sa  
Dhadhakata hai, bara-bara, rokane par bhi  
Palkon ki koren  
Atmaglani ke ansuonse  
Gili hui jati hain!  
Lankeshvara ne aja jo kaha hai, koi pati na kahega,  
Aura aja Mandodari ne jo saha hain  
Sansaara ki koi patni na sahegi!  
Aja mere pati ne  
Asoka-vatika men meri hi upasthiti men  
Para nari se pranaya-nivedana kiya  
Yahi nahi unhone tho  
Mera rajamahishi ka pada bhi  
Daon para laga diya!  
Aja se main -  
Lankeshvara ki nahi,  
Sita ki rini hun  
Usa/maryadita-drishti ki/abhari hun  
Jo Lankeshvara ki ora  
Uti hi nahin  
Anyatha-  
Sita aja Rajamahishi ke pada para  
Virajamana hoti  
Aura Mandodari  
Paricarkaon ki pankti men khadi  
Hoti!  
  
Aja pahali bara  
Maine jana  
Ki dampatya kya hota hai,  
Anyatha-  
Lanka ki bhogavadi sanskriti men  
Pali hui Mandodari  
Rajamahishi ke pada ko,  
Isa ratnajatita mukuta ko,  
Aura ina swarna-abhushanon ko hi  
Dampatya samajhati thi!  
  
Aja maine dekha-  
Rama ke lie  
Unki patni Sita

Eka rica hai! Eka sadhana hai!  
Eka tapasya hai!!!  
Aura Lankeshvara ke lie Mandodari  
Matr eka khilauna hai

Sundara tara khilauna dekhakara  
Jaise koi balaka  
Hatha men lie hue  
Khilaune ko dura phenka deta hai  
Usi taraha  
Sita ko dekhate hi  
Lankadhipati ne  
Mujhe thukara diya.....!  
Aja maine dekha-  
Dampatya jaba  
Atma ka ansa bana jata hai  
Taba vaha  
Itana samarthyaavana hota hai, ki  
Tinka-  
Talavara ko, parajita kara deta hai!

Abala Sita ke  
Hatha men utha hua "trina"  
Phahara raha tha  
'Shila' ki pataka-sa!  
Aura 'vasana' ke balasali kara men  
Ulthi hui 'candrasasa'  
Kunthita-parajita thi!

Anokha drisya tha-  
Manuja-danuja, yaksha-gandharva  
Indra aur yama ko bhi parajita  
Kara dene vala paurusha  
Sita ke-suci-dampatya ke samane  
Kitana bauna, kitana vivasa tha!

Lankeshvara/eka 'stri' se  
Yacana kara rahe the-  
Eka drishti ki yacana  
Pranaya-yacana!!!  
Kintu aja maine yaha bhi jana -  
Ki  
Dampatya ki snehamayi sadhana men  
Duriyon ka koi artha nahi hota!  
Rama samudra ke usa para hain

Sita-  
 Samudra ke isa para  
 Lanka men bandini hai,  
 Kintu aja jo dekha -  
 Kalpanatita hai vaha!  
 Asoka taru tale baithi Sita ke  
 Roma-roma men -  
 Rupayita the - Rama!  
 Sita ke swasa-praswasa mein  
 Spandita the- Rama!  
 Sita ke asru-asru men pratibimbita  
 The - Rama!  
 Rama hi Rama -

Kevala Rama!  
 Aja maine anubhava kiya -  
 Ki dura hote hue bhi -  
 Rama, Sita ke kitane nikata the  
 Aura mere parsva men khade  
 Mere pati -  
 Mere apane nahin the!

Dampatya -  
 Eka anokha anubandha hai,  
 Eka ka acarana  
 Dusere ko tatksana  
 Prabhavita karta hai,  
 Sita ki tulana men-  
 Kitani hina aura  
 Tuccha hogai hun main! (Matra Lankesvar ke  
 acarana ke karan )  
 dampatya-  
 jaba rakta banakara, dhamaniyon men pravahita  
 hota hai,  
 taba nayano men  
 sneha ki dipti jagamagati hai!  
 Maine Rama ko  
 Kabhi nahin dekha  
 Main nahin janati  
 Rama kaise hai?  
 Kintu aja maine  
 Sita ki drishti men-  
 Rama dekha hai!  
 Aja maine  
 Jo Rama 'kharadushana' ke satha  
 Apani patni ke lie  
 Itana bada samara raca sakate  
 Ve Rama  
 Sacamuca 'Rama' hi honge!  
 Yahan Lanka men  
 Lankesvara ki patarani main hun  
 Kintu isa prasada men raniyan to  
 Aneka hain.

Anya rajaon ki bhida men akele  
 Eka patni vrata dhari Rama -  
 Sacamuca ramya hain! Adarsa hai!!  
 Pranamiya hain!!!  
 Pati ka artha  
 Visavasa hi hota hai na?  
 Aja asoka vatika' men  
 Mera visavasa khandita hua hai,  
 Isiliye mujhe yaha lagata hai -  
 Ki aja main sindura-bindi  
 Mangala-sutra aura abhushanon se  
 Vibhushita hote hue bhi-  
 Vidhava ho gai hun aur,  
 Abhushana vihina Sita -  
 Dampatya ke teja se mandita hai  
 Sita ke pora-pora se -  
 Ujasa banakara prasphutita ho raha hai,  
 Rama ka sneha.....  
 Lanka ki svarna mundita divaron -  
 Lankesvara dwara  
 Kubera se chine gaye swarnakosha,  
 Aura mere in  
 Ratna jatita abhushanon  
 Se bhi adhika abhamandita hai  
 Sita ki ojasvi anana!  
 'suhagina hai vaha, -  
 jo priyatama ko bhaye'  
 sacamuca saubhagyavati hai Sita...

Site...! Tumhare isa,  
 Snehila gatabandhana ko  
 Kisi ki nazara na lage -  
 Main apane asuon se  
 Teri nazara utarati hun  
 Site!  
 Tumne lanka men akara  
 Bade kashta paye hai  
 Kintu Lanka ki  
 Bhogvadi sanskriti men pali  
 Hama saba striyan  
 Tumhari rini rahengi tumne  
 Hama saba ko dampatya ke  
 Nae patha padhaye hai!!

Dhairya rakho Site.  
 Pida ke kshana.....  
 Nikasha banakara  
 Vyaktitva ki pariksha karate hain,  
 Jo sacamuca kanacana hote hai-  
 Ve hi isa pariksha men khare utarate hain!  
 Site! Rama ka, Lankesvar se yuddha,  
 Aba avasya hoga  
 Aura uska parinama

Mujhe aja hi  
Dikhai de raha hai,  
Lankesvara ke ahankara ki sima men  
Rishi-muniyon ke asisha  
Kabhi bhi pravesa kara hi nahi paye,  
Janata bhayabhita hokara hi  
Unki jaya bolti hai  
Aura aja  
Unhone apni dharmapatni ka  
Visavasa bhi kho diya –  
Vaha vyakti- jivana ke ranangana men,

Jilega kaise?  
Sahdharmini ka visvasa,  
Kavaca banakara,  
Jisaki raksha na kara raha ho.  
  
Astu Site dhairya rakho!  
Agami mahasamara men –  
Rama hi jitenge.....  
Lankesvara hareng..... Rama hi  
Jitenge.....  
Rama hi jitenge. Rama hi jitenge.....!!

Translation of Appendix D  
*Look upon me (but) once*

(Mandodari's anguish)

Losing my very being I have just  
Returned from the 'Asoka - Vatika'  
I am so insulted, berated and  
Hurt!  
(My) heart is like a fire pit  
blazing, repeatedly, on stopping it,  
Tears of self-hate wet the corner of (my) eyelids

What Lankeshvara has said today, No husband  
would ever say  
And what Mandodari endured today  
No wife of this world would be able to endure.  
Today my husband in my presence  
In the 'Asoka-vatika'  
Made a supplication of love to another woman  
Not just this, he also  
Staked my title as the chief queen!  
As of today -  
I am not beholden to Lankeshvara,  
But to Sita  
I am grateful to that decorum-regulated glance  
That refused to turn towards Lankeshvara

Otherwise  
Sita today would have been ensconced as the chief  
queen  
And Mandodari  
Would be standing in attendance over her.

Only today  
I've learned  
What marriage is?  
Otherwise  
Mandodari who has grown up  
in the hedonistic culture of Lanka  
Hitherto understood this  
Status of chief queen,  
This jewelled crown,  
And these golden jewellery,  
To be marriage!

Today I saw that to Rama his wife Sita-  
Is a Vedic hymn, a dedication!  
A single-minded surrender!!!  
And to Lankeshvara Mandodari  
Is only a toy

Just as a child, on seeing a more beautiful toy  
Throws the one in his hand afar  
Exactly thus  
On seeing Sita  
The Lord of Lanka  
Has cast me aside.....!  
Today I saw-  
That when conjugal love  
Becomes part of one's soul  
Then it becomes  
So powerful that a blade of  
grass- (the one that Sita held between Herself and  
Ravana)  
can defeat a sword!

In the hand of (tender) Sita  
Grass served as a barrier  
As if a banner of moral conduct!  
And in the lustful, strong hands  
The raised 'candrasahas' (Ravana's sword)  
Was blunt and defeated!

It was a peculiar sight-  
Man, demon, nymphs and celestials  
Indra and Yama too, were defeated  
By this great hero  
Who now remains dwarfed by Sita's wifely  
virtue.  
How helpless he (Ravana) was!

Lankeshvara was begging a lady  
Begging for a look-  
Offering her marriage!!!  
But today I have also learnt that  
With affectionate devotion in a marriage -  
Distance has no impact!  
Rama is on that side of the ocean  
Sita-  
On this side  
A captive in Lanka,  
What I have seen today  
Is being and imagination  
Seated under the 'Asoka' tree  
In every pore of Sita was-  
Rama present!  
In every pore pulsed Rama

*In Sita's every tear, Rama was reflected  
Rama only Rama –*

*Only Rama!  
Today I realised that –  
Though apart –  
Rama was so very close to Sita  
And my husband, standing behind me  
Did not belong to me!*

*Marriage –  
Is a peculiar bond,  
The conduct of one  
Instantly affects the other,  
Compared to Sita  
I have become so destitute  
And insignificant!  
(Only because of Lankesvara's conduct)  
When marital ties  
Become blood and flow within the veins,  
Then light of that affection  
Sparkles in the eyes!  
I have never seen Rama,  
I do not know what he is like?  
But today  
I've seen Rama in Sita's eyes!  
I've seen Rama through Sita's eyes  
Today the Rama that I saw battled  
With 'kharadushana'  
For His wife  
That Rama  
Truly could only be 'Rama'!  
Here in Lanka  
I am Lankesvara's chief queen  
But in this palace there are many queens.  
Amongst the throng of kings,  
Rama stands alone in his resolve to monogamy-  
Truly beautiful, ideal!  
Worthy of respect!!!  
The meaning of a husband  
Is trust, is it not?  
Today in the 'Asoka Vatika'  
My trust was destroyed,  
That is why I feel-  
Although being adorned with vermilion,  
Mangala-sutra and other adornments of marital  
felicity  
I have become a widow and,  
Unadorned Sita,  
Is adorned with the brightness of her invincible  
marriage*

*Out of every pore of Sita  
Rama's love manifests itself-  
As a bright light.....  
Brighter than the golden walls of Lanka  
Even more splendid than the gold  
that was snatched by Ravana from Kubera,  
And my jewelled adornments  
Was Sita's bright face!  
She is a married woman-  
Who is loved by her husband  
Sita is truly fortunate as a wife...*

*Sita! Let no evil eye fall upon  
Your affectionate bond-  
I remove that evil eye  
With my tears  
Sita!  
On coming to Lanka  
You have received much pain  
But the women of Lanka  
who have been raised in this culture of enjoyment  
will be indebted to you  
as you have taught us a new meaning to  
marriage!!!*

*Be patient, Sita.  
These moments of pain  
Become the acid test-  
To test one's character,  
Only that which is pure gold-  
Will pass this test!  
Sita The war between Rama and Lankesvara  
Will certainly happen.  
And I can see the consequences of that already  
today,  
The blessings of Rishis and sages  
Were never able to enter  
the boundaries of Lankesvara's ego,  
People out of fear praise him  
And today  
He lost his wife's faith -  
How is that person going to win  
In the battlefield of life,  
Whose wife's faith no longer serves  
As a shield to protect him?  
Therefore Sita keep courage!  
In the forthcoming great battle  
Rama will win.....*

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2. BOOKS
3. JOURNALS AND BOOKLETS
4. MAGAZINE AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES
5. BROCHURES AND PAMPHLETS
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