

The ramayana



The ancient epic Ramayana reflects the golden period in the history of India, some 500BC ago. The message, the theme and the intricacy of the subject is as relevant today as it was then. It addresses a very complex social structure, the strings of morality and the psyche of the collective society in a very picturesque and powerful manner. It resonates with wisdom and religious fervor of the powerful associations with the supernatural. The story weaves a beautiful imagery of perfection in a mortal character Rama, as the ideal of virtue, vigor and wisdom.

It also captures the role of woman in Sita as an ideal, who has to repeatedly face the tests of the society which gives man the power to judge and rule. The intricate interaction between the characters is complex and subtle. The story interestingly capture the sound economic aspect of interaction based on exchange of services, desires, motivation and greed. The virtues come to surface in the ideals of human aspects of Rama, Sita, Laxmana and the vices are revealed in characters of Ravana, the Asuras and Bali.

It is human contact which leads to interaction, which ultimately results in trade of services, commodities, loyalty, favour and finally victory. The art of war is well submerged in the scenic imagery, strong characters and forced circumstances; the hidden aspect of trade based on the foundation of human contact is the underlying thread which binds the story from beginning to the end. The spiritual aspect of trade begins with the conception of the sweet shared by the queens for the sole purpose of pregnancy of the four princes- Rama, Laxmana, Bharata and Shatrughana.

The sweet offered was auspicious, given by a sage so that the queens would have children. So the main characters are the result of contact and deal made between the King and the Sage for the procurement of children for the queens. (Narayan, p6) This aspect is further emphasized, when Vishwamitra comes to the kingdom of Dasahratha to ask that Rama and Laxamana should go with him to the forest to fight with the Asuras and help him complete a Yagna. The power of the sage is what got him the boys for his protection. It was a trade of services for the fear of power.

Even the performance of Yagna is in itself a trade for more power through chanting and offerings. And, when you have this power you can command a King to do something against his will. Trade cannot exist without motive and human contact. (Narayan, p8) The significance of the Golden Deer in the story is another example of trade for favour, imposed by more powerful. The Golden Deer was Marichi, a demon turned sage, who did not consent to this plot of Ravana with pleasure, he was forced and persuaded to play this role in Ravana's game of deception.

The plot was to abduct Sita and Marichi's role as the Golden Deer was to tempt Sita. Motive is always the force which initiates trade between people. The ideal hero Rama, killing Bali from behind the tree while Bali was having duel with his brother Sugriva is another such example of trade for life. In this instance Sugriva had given Rama useful information about Sita, and that bound Rama to help Sugriva get his rightful Kingdom and his wife back from Bali, who had forcefully taken both the possessions from Sugriva.

Desire is the force which propels human contact and with human contact trade of favours in most precarious circumstances. The final and the most vulnerable moment to witness such trade of information is when Vibhishana, Ravana's own younger brother joins Ramas camp and advises him to " Kill Ravana in the center" as that is where his life force is. This is the climax of trade and contact with people resulting in the final victory of good over evil. There is no war without subtle human play and even subtler deals.