



Religious Gatheka – Hazrat Inayat Khan

23. Rama

RAMA, the great prophet and ideal of the Hindus was at the same time the example of the Godhead. The character of Rama is said to have been foretold by Valmiki. At the same time the training which was given to Rama by a great Rishi, whose name was Vashishta, was a training to bring out that kingdom of God which is hidden in the heart of man. In this respect Rama was not only an ideal of the Hindus of that particular age, but was a model to mould the character of those who tread the spiritual path in any age.

Rama was a prince by birth, but was given to be trained under a sage, where he lived the life in the solitude, the life of study and play together. He was not only taught to read and write, but he was trained in athletic exercises, in sports and had a training in all the manner of warfare. This shows what education the ancient people had, an education in all the directions of life. And being trained such Rama completed his course of study about the time of the prime of his youth.

The story of Rama has been always considered as the most sacred scripture for the Hindus, it is called Ramayana. The Brahman recites this story in a poetic form which the devotees of the master listen to for hours without being tired of it. For they take it as their religious training.

The most interesting part of Rama's life is his marriage. In the ancient times there was a custom that the husband was chosen. This custom came owing to the tendency to warfare. At every little trouble the princes of the time were up in arms even in such matters as marriage..

In order to avoid war the father of Sita invited all the princes and potentates of his land and gave the right of selection to his daughter. There was a time appointed when they all gathered in the royal gallery, all adorned in their regal ornaments and garbs.

Rama lived a simple life. He had not yet known what princely life means, for he was being trained under a saint where he ate the same food as the sage did, wore the same simple clothes as the sage and lived in

the woods in the solitude. Yet the brightness of the soul shines out even without ornaments. When Sita entered among this assembly, with a garland of flowers in her hands, her first glance fell upon Rama and she could not lift her glance from that ideal of her soul to anyone else, for her soul recognized the pearl in his heart. Without a moment's pause Sita came immediately to him and put the garland around the neck of that youth, so simple unassuming, standing with an innocent expression behind all the shining hosts.

Many marveled at this choice, but many more became as glowing fire with the thought of envy and jealousy. Among them, the one who was most troubled was the king of Lanka, Ravana. For Sita was not only known as the most beautiful princess of the time, but also was called Padmani, the ideal maiden. As Rama was an example in his character, so in Sita the ideal character was born. Then came the separation of the two: Sita, who had followed Rama in his twelve years Vandavasa, which means roaming in the forest, was once left alone in the woods, and Rama had gone to fetch some water. At that time Sita disappeared. After a great difficulty and a great grief the trace was found. She had been taken prisoner by Ravana. She steadily lived for Rama in this captivity and would not yield to Ravana's temptations and threatenings. In the end victory was won. Rama fought the battle with Ravana and brought Sita back home.

This story gives the picture of life being a struggle for everyone, in a small way or a big way. The outer nature of the struggle may be different for everyone, but at the same time no one can live in the midst of this world and be without a struggle. In this struggle, the one who wins in the end has fulfilled the purpose of his life, who loses in the end has lost.

The life of Rama suggests that, spiritual strife apart, the struggle in the world is the first thing to face; and if one keeps to one's own ideal through every test and trial in life, one will no doubt arrive at a stage when he will be victorious. It does not matter how small be the struggle, but victory won in the end of every struggle is the power that leads man further on the path towards life's goal. The life of a man, however great and spiritual, has its limitations. Before conditions of life, the greatest man on earth, the most powerful soul will for a moment seem helpless.

But it is not the beginning that counts, it is the end. It is the last note that a great soul strikes which proves that soul to be real and true.