

15AVP201 – AMRITA VALUES PROGRAMME I

RAMAYANA

SECOND ASSESSMENT

INSTRUCTIONS:

Choose any ONE of the following themes and write an essay in not less than 2000 words (4 A4 pages). Weightage: 20 marks

Essays should be neatly typed in Microsoft Word (Times New Roman 14pt font, double line spacing) and uploaded to the assignments section in Microsoft Teams Class.

The name of the submitted word file should be your Roll Number as it appears on your ID card.

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited. Copy pasting content from any internet or other published work will fetch negative marking. Students can read articles and books but the final essay should be written in your own words.

Evaluation will be based on the following key criteria – originality, content, presentation and creativity.

1. Ancient India did not harbour a uniform idea of God — many philosophers, for example, argued that devatā is nothing more than a word; others argued that Puruṣa is infinite (in number) and is not the creator of the world; still others considered Īśvara rather like Plato’s demiurge — an architect who creates the world out of a pre-existing set of conditions and substance; and so on. For ancient Indians, “belief in a God” did not make the world “meaningful” — belief in myths did. Modernity, on the other hand, is an anomaly in that it is utterly empty of myths and therefore profoundly profane. Modernity “began” in 16th century Europe; the whole world let go of the older way of life to adopt to the new way of life. India, on the other hand, struggled to keep the older way of life alive in the modern world. We (Indians) find ourselves suspended, like Triśanku, between two worlds — the past and the present; and it is hard to perform intellectual trapeze acts between the two — harder to let go of either. Discuss how the puranic stories made life meaningful for ancient India. Do you think we must keep it alive today? Why?

2. Rama meets several sages like Sarabhanga, Sutikshna, Agastya and other great personalities like Shabari and Jatayu. He also encounters Rakshasas like Viradha, Khara, Dushana and Shoorpanakha. Elucidate the responses of Rama in these situations.
3. The episode of Golden stag in the Araṇya Kāṇḍa of Rāmayaṇa is significant in many senses. It changed the course of the story of Rāmayaṇa and also introduced the multiple dimensions of the characters leading this segment; such as Mārīca's wisdom, Sītā's anger, Rāmā's fate, Lakṣmaṇa's dilemma and so on. Discuss this episode in this perspective and also elaborate how it is relevant even today.
4. After Kauśika took Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to attend the svayaṁvara in the King Janaka's court, Rāma conducts himself so admirably humble to follow His Guru's instructions and performs a spectacular feat that seemed humanly impossible and marries Sītā. Marriage---the Sītārāmakalyāṇa---was so grandly celebrated after which Paraśurāma's appearance to challenge Rāma's prowess was another thrilling incident which was too so spectacularly portrayed by the Ādikavi. "Rāmō rāmamudaikṣata" Rāma beheld the Rāma...thus says the poet, while describing that Paraśurāma felt powerless. Then, Manthara's entry that which changed the course of all the expected events, is described in Ayōdyākāṇḍa. Describe all of these mentioned here as vividly as possible in your own and not less than 2000 words.
5. Hanuman was the role model for many heroes of resistance movements against foreign invaders in Indian history. Using relevant anecdotes from history and the Ramayana, explain why Hanuman has become one of the most popular and inspiring icons of Indian tradition and folklore. Also, write a brief note on the Sundara Kanda of the Ramayana and justify why it is called as the most beautiful Kanda of the Ramayana.
6. Narada lists out 64 qualities of the perfect man to Maharishi Valmiki at the beginning of the Ramayana. Using relevant incidents from the epic, list out these extraordinary qualities and values which Rama's character has become identified with.

7. The episode of the killing of Vali presents a moral dilemma. Through such incidents, the epics try to sharpen our understanding of what is right and wrong in complex situations. Analyze this episode and explain why Rama was justified in protecting Sugriva and punishing Vali.