

Governance, Management, and Leadership Defined in Ramayana

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Abstract:

The field of Governance, Leadership, and Management has been developed by learning from various disciplines of knowledge. It is said that the corporate learning are driven from our great epics like Ramayana. So in this paper we have collected some lessons that we can understand with the help of Ramayana and also we will see their scope and application in the corporate world. Leadership has its own prominence be it in business, in spirituality, in politics, in defense, or in any field one could think of. Put in simple terms, leadership is about alignment of thought or action of a group for a cause. It is about taking charge and influencing others to follow your vision. This paper makes an attempt to understand leadership the Ramayana way.

Index Terms: Governance, Management, Leadership,

I. INTRODUCTION

Israelmore Ayivor has said, "True leaders are like statues, whether it rains or it shines, they never bend their necks to look backwards! They never run away from challenges!" [1] Lord Ramachandra is also known as the avatar of Lord Vishnu. Vivekananda ji explained the immortal character of lord Ramachandra in his words, "Rama, the ancient idol of the heroic ages, the embodiment of truth, of morality, the ideal son, the ideal husband, and above all, the ideal king, this Rama has been presented by the great sage, Valmiki". [2]

The Ramayana is a Hindu epic, this paper in your hand does not deal with religion but it adopts leadership examples from Ramayana.

While Rama gives examples on how a leader should be, Ravana gives examples on how a leader should not be. When you consider Rama an ordinary person, you get to learn lot of noble qualities from him.

II. RAMAYANA

The Ramayana is one of the largest ancient epics in the Indian literature. It consists of nearly 24 thousands verses (mostly set in the form of Shloka), divided into 7 Kandas and about 500 sargas (chapters). In Hindu tradition, it is considered to be the first poem (adi-kavya). It depicts the ideal duties, portraying ideal characters like the ideal father, the ideal wife, the ideal brother, the ideal king and the ideal servant. Ramayana was an highly influence on the Hindu life and culture. The characters Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Hanuman, Shatrughna, and Ravana are all fundamental to the cultural consciousness of India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, Malaysia, Cambodia and Indonesia.

III. RAM

Rāma, Ramachandra or also known as Ram, is a major god of Hinduism. Rama is 7th avatar of the god Vishnu. [3] Rama was born in Ayodhya. Kaushalya and Dasharatha are his mother and father. His father was the king of the Kingdom of Kosala. His siblings were Lakshmana, Bharata, and

Shatrughna. He married Sita. He although born in a royal family, but his life is described in the Hindu texts as one challenged by unexpected changes such as an exile into impoverished and difficult circumstances, ethical questions and moral dilemmas. [4] The entire life story of Ramayana discusses duties, rights and social responsibilities of an individual. It illustrates the way to live life 'dharmaic living' through model characteristic of Rama, Sita and others. [4][5]

IV. LEADERSHIP SKILLS

1. Developing right attitude:

Most of us give a great start but fade off the firmness of purpose. But a leader cannot do so. We have to possess unflinching determination and unfailing memory that is because every small step that a leader takes highly influences all stakeholders directly or indirectly. Rama's positive determination in keeping his vow to please his parents.

"Upon receiving orders from his father, Rama decided to leave for 14 years of forest life. It was his step mother Kaikeyi's idea that Rama leaves Ayodhya. Lakshmana got outraged hearing this and started cursing Kaikeyi. But Rama was determined to accept his parents' orders and instructed Lakshmana not to curse their step-mother."

When we start with a new task, we would be doing so with lot of unknowns. It is our own will power that can lead us through hardships towards task completion. Will power arranges all that you need to succeed!

In the historical war between Rama and Ravana, a huge monkey's mob was on Rama's side while Ravana had a strong army of demons. The demons were powerful, well trained, well organized, well equipped with sophisticated weapons & safeguards and most importantly they were on their own land. But monkeys were not so powerful, had no weapons and, had to counteract using trees, stones and their claws, teeth. Yet the monkeys had strong will power to fight for Rama and thereby won the war at last.

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2. Understand Others

A leader must understand other's feelings and ideas. He/she always respect human psychologies; observe general psychology of supervisors, sub-ordinates, fellow mates, relatives, common man, customers etc. These observations will help in important decision making at various situations.

When Rama decided to leave Ayodhya and lead a forest life, Lakshmana strongly opposed so did everyone else except Kaikeyi. But still Rama could convince each one of them individually as he knew their pulse and then could leave for the forest for only respect of his father and mother.

Do not take offense when criticized by others and be pleased by the kindness shown by others.

While returning to Ayodhya after marrying Sita by snapping Lord Siva's bow, Rama was stopped on the way by Parasurama and was strongly criticized for considering being himself a great hero. Rama was then challenged to fight against Parasurama. Rama did not take offense but pleasingly accepted the challenge and destroyed Parasurama's ego.

This point is especially important in professional life as we often do not know our weakness and when someone criticizes us that only means we have something to improve. This positive outlook will surely take us to greater heights.

Be loyal not only to your boss but also to your subordinates.

When Lakshmana was wounded during the war, Rama told to Susena, a monkey warrior, that without Lakshmana victory would be meaningless to him and that he would die in case Lakshmana dies because Lakshmana was loyal enough to follow him to forest and dedicate his life for Rama's service. If you are loyal to others you will get loyalty in return.

3. Assigned duty as per the capability

A great leader understand the others' capabilities.

When Hanuman returned to Rama after visiting Sita in Lanka, Rama praised him a lot for his extraordinary accomplishment. Hanuman was the best as he accomplished more than the assigned duty of finding out Sita. He not only found Sita but also showed Rama's strength to Ravana and also warned Ravana to relieve Sita and return her to Rama.

4. Positive nature

Rama was always charitable irrespective of his position as a princess in Ayodhya, as a wanderer in forest, as a warrior in Lanka and as a guest in Sugriva's kingdom.

Be courageous, self-controlled, peaceful, tolerant, charitable, and humble. A leader offers an example of courage and sacrifice.

5. Keep your promise

If you do so people will trust you and will be willing to invest their money, time, energy for you. So most of your tasks will become simple when you get others' help in return to your's help to others. We will need to help one another and cannot survive in isolation.

Sugriva and Rama had a mutual agreement of helping each other in rescuing their wives respectively. Rama first helped Sugriva by killing Sugriva's brother Vali and restoring his kingdom & wife. Sugriva in turn kept his promise by

arranging the monkey army to search and find Sita.

6. Anger management

Don't fall prey to uncontrolled anger's influence.

Hanuman after discovering Sita in Lanka decided to destroy part of Lanka to show Ravana the power of Rama. Hanuman wantedly got captivated and presented in front of Ravana who then out of uncontrolled anger ordered Hanuman's tail to be set fire. Ravana had to pay off for his uncontrolled anger as Hanuman set almost entire Lanka ablaze before leaving it.

Use anger in a constructive way and not in a destructive way. Anger will fetch you nothing; forgive mistakes and start fixing problems.

Envy and anger are human's biggest enemies, overcome them.

Envious of Rama's fame in Ayodhya, Kaikeyi's maid-servant Manthara decided to sow seeds of envy and anger in Kaikeyi's heart. Under Manthara's influence, Kaikeyi not realizing what harm she was causing to herself and to rest of the world demands her husband Dasharatha to order Rama to leave for forests. Rama obediently followed the orders and left Ayodhya. The result was that Dasharatha died out of grief leaving Kaikeyi a widow and also a subject of curse of the entire kingdom. Kaikeyi lost everything for being envious and cruel to Rama. She could have thought of a win-win situation in which Kaikeyi's son Bharata and Kausalya's son Rama along with other brothers could all rule the kingdom together.

Jealous, passion, fear, anger, lust, personal grudge, revenge and such other emotions blur your thoughts.

7. Set big target

Take daring steps, think big and achieve big.

After Sita was kidnapped, Rama had a big task of conquering her kidnapper and rescuing her. Defeating Ravana and rescuing Sita would not have been possible if Rama kept worrying about his fate. He had to take daring steps towards his accomplishment. He had no initial estimate as to where to search, how long to travel, how long to wait etc. He took one step after the other with full focus, he managed to arrange a big army of monkeys, and he got the estimation of the opponent's strength through Hanuman. He systematically used the monkey force by organizing leads at various levels; he got a great bridge constructed across the sea for the entire monkey force to march to Lanka. He planned the war quite well, and finally achieved his biggest accomplishment which was otherwise almost impossible to make.

Dreams give you lot of messages, decode them and you will be left astonished knowing how wonderfully your subconscious mind works.

8. Stress management

It is more the mental strain than the physical strain that makes us feel sick.

During the combat, Ravana severely wounded both Rama & Lakshmana and left to his palace assuming his victory. But he soon discovered the monkey mob's bravado and realized the Rama & Lakshmana recovered almost instantly, it was the mental strength that made them get into form.

Most of our illness or strain is due to our negative thoughts.

9. Professionalism

Professionalism is important and it varies in each context. It is important to understand what it means and to agree to it.

While sending his sons to the battle, Ravana decorates them with ornaments and garlands that fit to demon princes. The underlying intention was to develop enthusiasm among demons and create chaos among monkeys.

Change your attire as per the situation in which you are.

Behave professionally, always be noble and fair. Nobody might cross to validate nobility area. It is only our attitude that creates opportunities for us.

In the battle field, Sugriva had a combat with Kumbhakarna. Sugriva perceived that he is powerful but at this time he was very much exhausted and so did not kill him & offered him to return to palace. Sugriva can defeat him but he behaved professionally as per existing norms of war.

10. Learn to say sorry and thank you.

Indra gifted Rama with a chariot along with its charioteer, Matali. During face to face fighting with Ravana, Rama headed towards battlefield in his new chariot and was giving instructions to Matali but soon realized that it was Indra's charioteer and asked for apology. Rama infact had complete rights to order the charioteer. Moreover, being a king he need not ask for apology to anyone on his mistake.

This incident shows us a saying 'sorry' or 'thank you'. Feel the apology and say sorry if you trouble someone and try not to repeat it. In saying thank you or sorry do not feel that you are reduce our dignity but it increase it several folds.

11. Humility

Learn to smile away difficulty. Treat happiness and suffering as equal.

During the direct fight between Ravana and Rama, Ravana assaulted Rama with thousands of arrows. Ravana's arrows could injure Rama physically but could not steal away smile on his face.

Make a point where you can meet your team regularly and spend some light moments with them. Take out separate time for casual meets because formal meetings may not have fun.

12. Balance in life

Don't bring office work to home and home problems to office, try to practice this.

During the battle Rama was single minded and had no other thought but to defeat Ravana to rescue Sita. After the battle concluded, Rama immediately gave up his anger and assumed his usual gentle appearance as if nothing happened before.

Work life balance allows you to create & sustain energy that will carry you to the top.

13. Habit management

A leader should be capable to manage habits effectively. Success is not possible without the inner urge; similarly habit management is also not possible without the inner urge. You will enjoy doing what you like.

Hanuman was given the toughest task of finding Sita. The task was difficult in nature as he had to cross sea by flying in the air. The breadth of the sea was not known; even if he could cross the sea, would he be able to find out Sita was also not known. With so many difficulties involved, the task was an almost impossible feat. But Hanuman's attitude was praise worthy and very positive about bringing back good news to Rama.

14. Hiring skills

A leader cannot do his job all by himself. He would need to find answers to so many unknowns in the business game. So, leaders should learn to hire those who can find solutions for them as they cannot afford to waste time in searching for all answers on their own.

During search, Rama & Lakshmana happened to meet Kabandha, a demigod who suggested them to see Sugriva, a king of monkeys residing on Rsyamuka Hill. Kabandha also described Sugriva and Rama realized that hiring Sugriva would be the first step towards success in finding Sita. Sugriva was a powerful monkey king with a huge force of monkeys at his disposal. He had members who could get deep below earth, could climb mountains or trees easily and even jump across far away places at one go. All those feats that Rama could otherwise not perform could easily be accomplished by getting in agreement with Sugriva.

Bring in the experts to get the job done.

15. Motivation skills

Motivation is all about motivating the others. If you want someone to perform great tasks, inspire them. Bossism never requires motivating others but assertive leadership depends on motivation.

At the stage of getting ready to reach Lanka, the entire monkey mob with the direction of Rama and Lakshmana set to construct a bridge from extreme south of India to the sea shores of Lanka. The construction of bridge was not an ordinary feat as it had to be over the ocean's surface and that too using floatable stones. This important feat of constructing a vast bridge by millions of monkeys for their own march to Lanka was one of feats that showed Rama's extraordinary potency as a great leader.

16. Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing is about helping people to discover their own potential to resolve their own issues. This is not all about telling them about whole solution of the problem. The more you solve problems for people, the more they will bring their problems to you.

Valmiki wrote entire Ramayana and was looking for someone who could spread it to the entire world. At that moment, Sita along with her two children Lava & Kusa was residing in Valmiki's ashram, Valmiki then considered these children suitable for propagating Ramayana all over the world. The children were active, quick at memorizing toughest poems, were eager to master Ramayana and above all were the sons of Rama himself. Valmiki was right in taking this decision as the children made extraordinary performances wherever they went to entail Ramayana to common man.

So the selection of the right candidates, for bestowing knowledge from Ramayana was also crucial in Rama's success in fight with Ravana.

If the team leader of a project distributes work load among the team according to the capability of team members than project cannot be fail and success will be definite.

17. Team management & people engagement

People skills are mostly about people engagement. Here the term 'people' includes - your teams, higher management, organization, customers and also competitors.

Before Sugriva set his monkey army on Sita's search, Rama shared his vision of finding Sita with Sugriva, Hanuman and other chiefs. He then expressed his expectations of seeing some belonging of her as a proof of her existence. His vision and expectations were simple. Sugriva then express his own expectations that aligned with Rama's and shared them with his all army chiefs. Sugriva's wanted that every chiefs should form their own teams and set the different directions for searching of Sita. The aim was only to search Sita and bring her back to home. Sugriva clearly explained where to and where not to search. The execution was time bound and everyone was expected to return on time to report their findings. Thus a clear cut vision that was cascaded from top management, Rama could stir positive energy in the monkeys who were given enough freedom of execution and so the monkeys could complete the mission, of finding Sita, with great commitment.

18. Prototype designs

To speed up productivity on a project, get prototypes, designs done quickly by small teams and finally arrange a meeting to choose the best of the designs that are suitable for the project.

One month after all the monkeys were set on searching mission, all chiefs except Hanuman returned disappointed as he did not find Sita. Sugriva along with Rama closely evaluated the situation based on what the chiefs had to say and they finally concluded that Hanuman was the only hope.

This method of making different groups work on same piece but using different approaches helped Sugriva to take quick decisions and there by speed up the process of searching Sita.

19. Give team chance to rectify its mistakes & improve it.

Before the war, Ravana sent spies to Rama's camp in Lanka to estimate enemy's strength. The spies mingled among the monkeys disguised as monkeys but were soon caught by Vibhishana as was familiar with them. Immediately monkeys surrounded the spies and beat them severely.

However when this situation brought to Rama's attention, he mercilessly ordered them to be set free. The spies went back to Ravana and reported all that happened and praised Rama in front of Ravana himself as they had powerful impression of Rama's nobility in their minds. Thus Rama gained good will among enemies team also just by giving them an opportunity to reflect on their mistakes.

When one team member has trouble getting something done, other team members should rush to help. This will develop unity and confidence within the team, which are quite essential for smooth execution.

During the war, Angada had to fight with another son of Ravana, Trisira. The combat was again furious but at one stage Trisira struck three arrows in Angada's forehead. Hanuman & Nila immediately rushed to help Angada though they were already engaged in combat with other demons. They took extra efforts to sail their prince through. Mutual help amongst monkeys kept them moving with confidence and so the monkeys could win the show with grace.

20. Distribute awards and rewards.

Your team deserves nice treatment with a couple of awards and rewards.

Once the war ended, Sita was brought to Rama and all were set to leave Lanka. Before leaving Rama summoned all the monkey warriors and praised them for their heroic feat on his behalf. With this he requested them to return to Kishkindha and live happily under Sugriva's leadership.

Rama's courtesy made the monkeys even more devoted to him. Team awards are as important as individual excellence awards.

21. Respect:

Respect others' feelings. Adhere to truth, and show love to your fellow beings. "When you respect others, others will respect you in return" and will show interest in what you have to say. And so it will be easy to drive your thoughts.

Rama along with Lakshama & Sita used tree barks for clothes. Rama & Lakshmana matted their hair like Rishis, they used wooden sandals for footwear. This attire was the then uniform normally followed by those who used to reside in forests. The change in clothing was mostly to improve comfort level whilst their stay in the forest. Rama expressed his respect to forest by doing this.

22. Cost cutting:

Bottom line cost cutting is not exciting but it definitely improves balance sheet. But if cost cutting effects salaries then that will definitely demoralize employees, so this attempt will directly affect team's performance.

Keep good relations with those who are loyal, intelligent, generous, wise, brave & powerful.

While Sita's search, Rama and Lakshmana came to know that Sugriva, a monkey king resided on Rsyamuka hill. They learnt from Kabandha, a demigod, that Sugriva was loyal, intelligent, generous, wise, brave & powerful. Rama & Lakshmana then immediately set to meet him and make friends with him. Rama's decision to make alliance with Sugriva made an easy path to recover Sita within short period of time.

23. Respect to superior

Higher management normally does not like team members arguing with them or finding faults with them. At times arguments and pin-pointing mistakes is definitely required by that has to be done in a manner that the receiver is not hurt.

From the very day the war between Rama & Ravana commenced, Ravana kept loosing all his relatives, army chiefs one after the other. At one stage Rama was far superior in strength. All the well-wishers of Ravana started suggesting

him to return Sita to Rama. But Ravana was adamant enough to be deaf to good advice. Therefore, Ravana had to die to and declare the end of war.

24. Utilize opportunities properly

Make sure this does not hurt your boss or subordinates. You definitely need to bag those opportunities that come your way but also consider that this will not impact the chances of your subordinates to prove their point.

During the direct combat between Rama & Ravana the demigods from heaven observed that the war was not being fought fairly as Ravana was riding a chariot but Rama was upright on the battle field. Taking this observation as a hint Indra, sent a chariot and charioteer, Matali to Rama. Rama immediately accepted this opportunity and continued the combat. Rama took an opportunity but that was no way bothering his followers; if accepting chariot from Indra anyone bothered Rama, he would have straight away rejected that honour.

25. Relation between team and leader:

Without a proper leader even a large team becomes hopeless. If a team does not perform well, it is mostly not the team that is to be blamed but its leader that is to be.

When fight between Rama and Ravana going on, Indrajit, Ravana's son assaulted Rama & Lakshmana and wounded them all over the body. Rama & Lakshmana lost all their physical and mental stamina, they lost all their weapons and fell unconscious. Seeing this, monkeys became despondent. Indrajit assumed Rama's death and left to his palace.

The context is set here not to say that Rama is to be blamed, but to show how the relation of team with its leader will have direct impact on team's performance as a whole.

26. Team building:

You cannot do everything so, employ others who can fill your short comes. For instance, a leader cannot involve in all phases of a product development life cycle. So he needs to employ people with versatile talents and abilities who could do the jobs for him.

In Ramayana, Rama had employed Hanuman for job that was unique in its nature. Hanuman could fly distances and could multiply his strength several folds at ease. Similarly there were many in the monkey army with exceptional abilities. Rama had an advantage due to these versatile talents.

Team formation depends on project vision, required abilities, positive aspects, execution time and also individual's mentality. Team building and retrospection is instrumental in project success.

27. Observation skills

Observation skills are quite essential as all the information that we need is not always available readymade. We might have all the material handy but scattered, in which case it is not easy to take intelligent decisions.

During the war when Indrajit realized that it is difficult to defeat Rama decided to play trick against him. He brought an illusionary Sita in the battlefield and slashed her to death. Assuming illusion to be reality, Rama almost fainted and all

the monkeys lost their confidence. Vibhishana knew Indrajit's tricks and so could simply make illusion. He convinced everyone that it was not original Sita who was killed. Thus Vibhishana's skill to distinguish between illusion and reality saved emotional defeat of Rama's army.

28. Problem solving skills

The leader focuses on solutions & actions, while everyone else is indulging in an orgy of doubt. And if the solution of a problem demands change, then be ready to change.

Narada told Valmiki that Rama thinks beyond the obvious to keep his kingdom misery free. There were no diseases or mental disturbances in the kingdom, no fear of scarcity, thieves or hunger. The entire kingdom was filled with vegetables, fruits, milk and grains.

Rama had the vision of abundance for his kingdom and planned well to get his vision executed.

29. Attack the problem not its symptoms.

Rama was sent Hanuman to Lanka to find Sita there. After meeting Sita and convincing her that Rama would come soon to rescue her, Hanuman decided to show his power to Ravana. He started destroying one of the gardens in Lanka and tempted Lanka soldiers to capture him. Hanuman's capture was not easy, several soldiers had to die and Indrajit, a son of Ravana had to use a powerful weapon to capture Hanuman. When Hanuman was brought into court of Ravana, Ravana get anger and ordered for Hanuman's slaughter. Vibhishana was younger brother of Ravana, he suggested Ravana not to kill messenger of the enemy but to try to kill enemy directly.

Vibhishana's message to Ravana was to attack the source of the problem but not its symptoms.

30. Be open to ideas from all

You cannot alone generate all great ideas from various perspectives.

During the battle it was quite difficult to defeat Kumbhakarna, a gigantic younger brother of Ravana. Rama tried his ways of defeating him but couldn't. Lakshmana then gave Rama an idea - As Kumbhakarna is intoxicated from drinking blood he could not discriminate between monkeys and demons so if thousands of monkeys climb over Kumbhakarna's body to out weight him then it would be easy to defeat him. Rama took this idea and immediately implemented it; and so took no time to kill Kumbhakarna.

Rama never assumed himself to be a knower of everything, he was open to ideas from anyone regardless of their positions and this kind of mind set made him a great leader.

31. Competitive skills

The importance of possessing this skill is cannot be debated. Do not keep track of the market and your competition for few months, and you are almost out of the competition!

Before Rama's army constructed a bridge to reach Lanka, Ravana sent a spy demon called Suka who assumed a bird's form and surveyed the area where Rama's army resided and began estimating their strength. Sugriva identified that the bird was a spy and all the monkeys at once attacked Suka.

Few monkeys cut off the bird's wings and beat him savagely. Rama intervened and mercilessly assured that Suka would be set free once they all reached Lanka. Thus, Rama was kind enough and sensitive enough to hide his strengths from his opponent, Ravana.

32. Risk management

Risk, irrespective of its magnitude, is inevitable in any business. There are few risks that can be mitigated and there are few which cannot be resolved in a time frame and so have to be lived with by trading off other aspects of the business.

Viswamitra accepted the impossible challenge of sending Trisanku to heaven alive. We can learn an important lesson from Vishwamitra on accepting challenges.

8. One task at a time with focus.

During the combat with Indrajit, Lakshmana was almost frustrated as Indrajit was using mystic powers. Helpless Lakshmana declared that he would invoke brahmasta, a very powerful weapon and destroy all demons at once. But then Rama suggested to attack only one enemy at a time and suggested him not to attack those who are not participating in the battle. Rama asked Lakshmana to have patience while combating Indrajit and discharge more celestial weapons at him.

You may be confident that your method works but to gain others' confidence you will have to test your method. Fail early and learn quickly so that you can succeed and deliver promptly.

V. CONCLUSION

This book makes an attempt to touch base upon most of the important skills required by modern day leaders. Ramayana epic has implicit reference to most of these skills through various characters that appear in it. This book makes an attempt to set such reference from Ramayana for each of the leadership skills. The exercises that are available under each section provide a useful source of information to master leadership skills.

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ⁱ Kumbha is the son of Kumbhakarna.

ⁱⁱ Angad is the son of monkey king Vali and prince of monkeys.

ⁱⁱⁱ Indra is the king of demigods of the Hindu religion.