



Management Skills as Learnt from the Ramayan: Gems of Wisdom from an Epic

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.2022.3.7.18>

Abstract

Although management practice has existed for centuries, management education has only recently become a distinct profession. The ancient Indian texts have served as knowledge reservoirs and contain allusions to contemporary management ideas and practices. One of India's most well-known religious works, the Ramayana, has a wealth of business insight that may easily be incorporated into contemporary management literature. If read and understood attentively, the complete epic may compete with many current management manuals. The goal of the current study is to improve contemporary management practice by using lessons from the Ramayana.

Keywords: Management, Literature, Practice, Managerial Lesson, Strategy

Introduction

According to conventional wisdom, management education is a field with a relatively recent history. The first MBA degree was awarded by Amos Tuck University in the United States of America in 1900, marking the beginning of the Management programme. However, management as a profession predates civilization since humans have always needed to manage their affairs and have been adopting the methods that management books discuss today.

Of course, the methods were more driven by necessity to conduct day-to-day business efficiently than by any theory or piece of advice from a management expert, and current jargons were not in style.

Many of the customs are mentioned in our old scriptural books. Therefore, gaining insights into management practices from the scriptures may provide light on how to efficiently manage day-to-day operations in enterprises. Although all of these works have made a major contribution to the growth of management literature and practices, the focus of the current essay is on managerial lessons learned from the Ramayana.

The Ramayana tells the story of Lord Rama, one of the Indian pantheon of Gods who is worshipped about most. There are numerous translations of the Ramayana into different languages, but the two most well-known versions are those by the sages Valmiki and Goswami Tulsi Das, who wrote the Ramayana and Ram CharitManas, respectively—both of which are commonly referred to as the Ramayana.

One of the greatest Indian epics, it offers timeless and universal lessons on leadership and statecraft.

We may learn a lot from this epic, especially if we discover that there are problems with how the state is being governed. Rama Rajya is the paradigm of excellent government, and India is looking for its own management ideas.

Let's look within for solutions rather than westwards. The Indian epic can also act as a genuine treatise on management when necessary, even though the Harvards, the Whartons, and the Stanfords may still have the upper hand in management theory and practice.

Finding the Ideal Management Paradigm

Despite all the developments in management theories, research, and practises, as well as the proliferation of management education institutions, it is still necessary to determine the best management methods. Even though the search for a good administrative paradigm is as old as civilization itself, this has proven elusive. From Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle to the French thinker Voltaire, many people have shared their opinions on how a state should be run.

The Orient has contributed significantly to the notion of governance, even though their thoughts may provide the western image of the ideal administrative structure. Our sacred texts, especially the Ramayana, are regarded as being a goldmine of knowledge when it comes to leadership, administration, and statecraft.

However, even more than 15 years into the twenty-first century, we are still unsure of what the prescription for the optimal paradigm for management practice should be.

The same may be said for effective government. We all talk about good governance and search for ways to build a decent government that come from ideologies to technology, but we are still unable to identify the best governance model. All types of capitalism, socialism, and communism have been attempted and are still in existence somewhere in the world. However, one thing is certain about all three forms: they haven't been able to get at the perfect state.

However, Ram Rajya is a common name for this ideal state in Indian slang. Although the origin of the name Rama Rajya is a matter of debate, the fact that it represents the pinnacle of sound government is universally acknowledged.

It may be difficult to define good governance, but we must acknowledge that it is more about governance than government. A well-known quotation in this context comes from Thoreau (1964), who said, "Government is best that governs the least."

Similar to this, it is suggested to avoid tight supervision in management theory. It may be difficult to define good governance, but we must acknowledge that it is more about governance than government. A well-known quotation in this context comes from Thoreau (1964), who said, "Government is best that governs the least."

Similar to how in management philosophy, it is advised to avoid tight supervision. It is advised to prevent excessive supervision. This precise strategy, according to which males should be trusted since they are generally decent, is discussed in McGregor's well-known Theory Y.

The essence of this philosophy is expressed by eminent author Harper Lee (1989) in her Classic, "To Kill a Mockingbird," wherein one of its leading characters Jean Atticus Finch, while explaining democracy, says: "Equal rights to all, special privileges to none." Prominent thinkers like Jefferson or Emerson have proclaimed less government as good governance. Good governance is what the public wants, even though it is difficult to achieve. It serves as the barometer by which the effectiveness of governments is measured and as the standard for best practices.

Ideal condition or ideal management technique, whatever comes to mind The Ramayana may be a helpful manual for both.

Ramayana: Why?

The choice of the Ramayana as the source that may provide insight into efficient management techniques for both the state and enterprise begs the issue of why. The first and foremost reason is because Lord Rama is revered in Indian culture as Maryada Purushotam, the ideal person and role model. In this context, Rama's personality has to be evaluated. His management style, attitude to leading his team, and method of handling challenges were all founded on the tenets of values and ethics.

His guiding principle was dharma, or justice, upon which he founded his choices. Given the widely held belief that right and wrong can depend on events and occasionally are affected by culture or society, there may be doubts about the universality of righteousness.

One must concede that certain fundamental principles have weathered the test of time. They have survived historical periods, cultures, and geographical distances to demonstrate that they are revered consistently over time and space.

Truthfulness and loyalty, contentment and integrity, humility and mildness have long been seen as good human traits whereas lying and treachery, greed and deception, vanity and egotism have always been regarded as bad.

Rama represented these admirable qualities. Rama has been a role model, has the best leadership style, and has excellent governance because of this, the recommended method.

The Ramayana provides the fundamentals of contemporary management and speaks concisely about Ram Rajya, or perfect administration. The essential skill of leadership Rama, the Prince of Ayodhya, who was aided only by an army of monkeys and had no armour or other protective gear, defeated Ravana, the mightiest of the demon kings, who had enormous wealth and a vast squad of fully armed soldiers and strategists.

Ramayana's Essential Management Lessons

Now, let's attempt to examine the management lessons the Ramayana has to provide. The focus is on righteousness or Dharma, which is the virtuous conduct that should be the bastion of all leadership acts, even if the entire text of the Ramayana provides teachings on strategic management, statecraft, good governance, and values-based leadership.

Rama focuses on a number of subtle issues of administration while providing Bharat advice on excellent government. The calibre of ministers, according to Lord Rama, is a crucial component of effective government. According to Lord Rama, the monarch must ensure that his advisors are wise, strong-willed, and emotionally intelligent men since the quality of advice is a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of government. The monarch must pick good persons, not just supporters.

The CEOs of today suffer from this problem because they seek approval over criticism. It's interesting to see that these Yes men prioritise their own interests over those of the organisation. The majority of governance and management issues start to appear when yes men begin to take the place of right men. Taking a look at today's corporations, one would see a plethora of such "yes men."

The Sundar Kanda, in contrast to the Ayodhya Kanda, is a classic narrative about strategic management. In fact, even the precepts found in the now-famous Sun Tzu's "Art of War" seem quite trite. This is especially clear when the Lord expresses his displeasure in public over the actions of the Ocean God, who consistently refuses to grant reasonable requests to cross the ocean.

This is especially clear when the Lord expresses his visible displeasure with the Ocean God's actions, which include refusing to grant reasonable requests to cross the ocean. For at least three days, the Lord had been pleading with the Ocean God without success. Rama then requests his brother Lakshmana to bring him his bow and arrow so he might use his firepower to forcibly dry up the ocean.

An irrational person only understands the language of fear, the Lord explains to Lakshmana. How accurate he was, too. The Ocean God trembled and submitted at the sight of the arrow, so it was not shot. There are plenty such lessons on how to deal with such irrational people.

However, the Uttar Kanda, where Lord Rama serves as an example of a CEO who always "walks the talk," provides the core of efficient human resource management. His character is characterised by humility in positions of authority and the ability to maintain composure under pressure, and management experts promote these traits as the most desirable traits for a contemporary CEO.

When Shatrughan faces up against the formidable demon king Lavnasur, one might expect to see Lord Rama giving him advice. The advice's main points are to take good care of your troops, treat them with respect and affection, and pay them fairly. These efforts significantly contribute to retaining the army's personnel's loyalty and motivation. Is the Drucker doctrine still relevant today?

There are also lessons about making decisions. Bharata receives advice from Lord Rama on how to make wise judgments. It should not be implemented unilaterally or after extensive consultation. A core group of good individuals with good motives should provide guidance.

Bharata has received advice from Rama on every aspect of leadership. Rama explains all the nuances of statecraft in a clear and concise manner, covering everything from the caliber of ministers and the significance of strategy meetings to administrative restraint and fairness. Inquiring after Bharata's wellbeing, Rama powerfully imparts lessons on good leadership.

Even though the two brothers' conversation spans several pages and needs a careful reading to fully comprehend the nuances, several crucial lessons are clear to see.

The caliber of a government's ministers is a key component. Rama questions Bharata about if he has chosen as his ministers any persons who are brave, competent, strong-willed, and have a high emotional quotient since sound counsel is essential for efficient government. Competence and secrecy are prioritised.

Rama advises Bharata to choose one smart person over a thousand idiots since the intelligent are the ones who can secure wealth in times of economic hardship. Even if there is just one truly effective minister, the monarch will benefit greatly. The secret to effective administration is to fill crucial posts with tried individuals of noble ancestry and integrity. The public should pay moderate taxes to avoid a backlash.

Rama urges Bharata to provide his soldiers good care and timely payment of their rightful wages. Paying salaries and other benefits late might have catastrophic repercussions. All of these are promoted by contemporary human resource management. It is a widely held belief that managers must behave differently depending on the ethos, which emphasises the necessity for management paradigms tailored to particular cultures. The question of whether there are management techniques that can be applied to different cultures, nations, and even generations must be answered. In other words, is there a management technique that would be applicable anywhere and at any time, a truly cross-cultural and tried-and-true management paradigm?

The Ramayana provides a paradigm that answers this question in the positive. Sir Thomas More first posed the topic of why businesses didn't work effectively more than 500 years ago and came to the conclusion that it was because of inadequate management. Since then, people have been looking for a solution to terrible management. Numerous theories have been put out, but rather of reducing confusion, they have increased it. However, there is broad agreement that good leadership is the cure for bad management. What does successful leadership look like? Answers might be as numerous as definitions.

However, the Ramayana provides a number of pointers on good leadership via the descriptions of Rama's deeds. the range of characters he performed and how well he embodied each one. Many CEOs would benefit from modelling Rama's approach to handling role conflicts.

Conclusion

It could seem like a popular trend to read management books and periodicals. However, the reality of the situation has its origins in long-ago historical periods. Through the Ramayana, seers like Tulsidas and Valmiki gave everyone in the modern managerial period tried-and-true management lessons.

It is crucial for all bosses to establish and communicate their vision to their employees, just like Rama did. As a result of having clear objectives, they would be more motivated to perform.

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