

Research Paper

Lord Rama: An Inspiration to Lead a Fulfilling Life

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ABSTRACT

Historical epics are regarded as the soul of culture, carrying infinite psychological concepts worth understanding and applicability. Since history, Ramayana and Shrimad Bhagavad Gita have remained the core of religious understandings and beliefs as well as guided mankind through the tough times. The Hero of Ramayana is ‘Lord Rama’, honorably referred as “Maryada Purushottam” meaning one having strong moral baseline. This character can be studied variably in major episodes throughout the epic. Apart from serving as religious books, epics form foundation-stone for having a prototype of a screened and conceptualized lifestyle. This includes being responsible, logical, accepting, caring, administrative, motivating, emotionally stable etc. This paper conceptualizes some of these characters in psychological context which not only enlightens the readers with the utility of such epics and characters but also shows the deep-rooted psychology in it.

Keywords: *Adjustment, Emotional Stability, Feminine Security, Lord Rama, Motivation, Role Conflict*

The ‘Ramayana’ revolves all-around ‘Lord Rama’ and focuses on his thinking and actions. It exemplifies his morale, characteristics and idealism to the current and upcoming generations. ‘Lord Rama’ is a unique character in history to have all the good qualities in a single identity that makes it technically impossible to have the same again. He is described as an ideal son, ideal brother, ideal husband, ideal father and an ideal leader/king. Even in Mahabharata – the 2nd Hindu Epic, he has been stated to be an ideal moralistic identity (Muniapan, 2007).

Mostly referred to as ‘Avatar’ in Hindu Mythology, ‘Lord Rama’ is said to be an a-live incarnation of God on earth to remove the increasing evils and purify as well as neutralize people’s mind and character (Mishra, 1993). Research has also shown that Ramayana gives various anecdotes which work as techniques, therapies and positive mindset in order to increase awareness and rational thinking to live a blissful life (Jacob & Krishna, 2003).

This paper discusses concepts of psychology namely Motivation, Political Accountability, Respect, Demolishing Un-touchability and Emotional Stability. These concepts can be easily

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traced in the epic where other major characters also play roles which justifies 'Lord Rama' as the most ideal individual like 'Raavana'- the antagonist, 'Lakshmana' – brother of Rama, 'Mata Sita' – Wife of Rama, 'Bharata' – brother of Rama and 'Hanumana' – disciple, troubleshooter and friend of Rama.

1. Motivation

The best incidence of motivation can be seen in the Valmiki Krit Shri Ramacharitamansa 'Kiskindha Kanda'. When the 'Vaana Sena'- the team of Monkeys headed by 'Lord Rama and Hanumana' reached the banks of the Indian Ocean to reach Lanka for rescuing Mata Sita, the ocean needs to be crossed – a task near to impossible. At this point, it was the motivation factor that worked the most. As per the verses, all the team members started praising 'Hanumana' to reinforce him and motivate him about his capabilities and potential which was forgotten by him due to prior mischief. The praises enlarged Hanuman which later helped in fulfilling the task. As the following excerpt goes:

“The king of bears then turned towards Hanuman: Listen, O mighty Hanuman: how is it that you are keeping mum? A son of the wind-god, you are as strong as your father and are a storehouse of intelligence, discretion and spiritual wisdom. What undertaking in this world is too difficult for you to accomplish, dear child? It is for the service of Lord Rama that you have come down upon earth. The moment Hanuman heard these words he grew to the size of a mountain, with a body shining as gold and full of splendour as though he was another king of mountains (Sumeru). Roaring again and again like a lion he said, “I can easily spring across the salt ocean and killing Ravana with all his army can uproot the Trikuta hill and bring it here.” (Ramcharitmanasa, Kiskindha Kanda, Doha-29).

In the above excerpt, motivation has been shown in the form of enlargement of physique and power of Hanuman in a manner that even an impossible task like flying over an ocean gets possible and Hanuman flies over to reach 'Lanka'. The above episode though inculcates the universal as well as the psychological concept of motivation via reinforcement showing how praise works as reinforcement factor making impossible possible.

2. Political Accountability hand in hand with Feminine Security as a demonstration of balance between Role Conflict

Not only in motivation, but the morality of being a great leader has been fulfilled by 'Lord Rama' (Muniapan, 2007). Among the population, there is a great misconception regarding the 'fire-test' (Agnipareeksha) given by 'Mata Sita' following the return to Ayodhya from their 14-year exile. The excerpts in *Aranya Kanda, Doha 23* clearly state that the fire test was not a test rather it was an initially well planned strategy safeguard 'Mata Sita' from outside dangers during the exile. The flashback to prior exile period, a similar episode had happened which declares that 'consentually, Mata Sita had entered into the fire and only the shadow part of her remained for the outer world to believe'. Even Lakshmana was kept unaware of the idea. The excerpt goes:

“Listen, my darling, who have been staunch in the holy vow of fidelity to me and are so virtuous in conduct: I am going to act a lovely human part. Abide in fire until I have completed the destruction of the demons.” No sooner had Lord Rama told Her everything in detail than She impressed the image of the Lord's feet on Her heart and entered into the fire, leaving with Him only of a shadow of Hers, though precisely of the same appearance and the same amiable and

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gentle disposition. Lakshmana too did not know the secret of what the Lord had done behind the curtain.”(Ramcharitmanasa, Aranya Kanda, Doha- 23)

After the gracious victory of Lord Rama and return to Ayodhya, the 2nd ‘Agnipareeksha’ – this time seen as ‘a test to prove sanctity of feminity and truth’ was called. This publically called ‘fire-test’ though is seen as the demand of Lord Rama resulting by the influence of public demand, but actually, the public did not know about the earlier episode during *Aranya Kanda* as described above. As *Doha 107 and 108 in Lanka Kanda* describing ‘Agnipareeksha’ says:

“Sita (it will be remembered) had been previously lodged in fire (vide Aranyakanda XXIII. 1-2); Lord Rama (the inner Witness of all) now sought to bring Her back to light.” (Ramcharitmanasa, Lanka Kanda, Chaupai 107)

“Sita, however, bowed to the Lord’s command- pure as She was in thought, word and deed - and said, “Lakshmana, help me as a priest in the performance of this sacred rite and quickly kindle me a fire.” When Lakshmana heard Sita’s words, full of anguish caused by separation (from Her Lord) and imbued with critical insight, piety and prudence, tears rushed to his eyes and he joined his palms in prayer; but he too could not speak a word to the Lord. Reading Sri Rama’s Rama’s tacit approval in His looks, however, Lakshmana ran and after kindling a fire brought plenty of firewood. Videha’s Daughter rejoiced at heart to perceive the blazing fire and did not flinch at all. “If in thought, word and deed I have never set my heart on anyone other than the Hero of Raghu’s line, may this fire, which knows the working of all minds, become cool like sandal-paste to me.”(Ramcharitmanasa, Lanka Kanda, Doha -108)

“With Her thoughts fixed on the Lord, the Princess of Mithila entered the flames as though they were cool like sandal-paste, crying “Glory to the Lord of Kosala, whose feet are adored by the great Lord Shiva with the purest devotion!” Both Her shadow-form as well as the social stigma (occasioned by Her forced residence at Ravana’s) were consumed in the blazing fire, but no one could know the secret of the Lord’s doings. Even the gods, Siddhas and sages stood gazing in the air. Fire assumed a bodily form and, taking by the hand the real Sri (Sita), celebrated alike in the Vedas and the world, escorted and presented Her to Lord Rama even as the Ocean of milk presented Goddess Indira (Lakshmi) to Lord Vishnu. Standing on the left side of Sri Rama, She shone resplendent in Her exquisite beauty like the bud of a gold lily beside a fresh blue lotus.” (Ramcharitmanasa, Lanka Kanda, Chand - 108)

This shows that there were 2 reasons for having ‘Agnipareeksha’ done. The widely known reason was that of public pressure of test of sanctity which unveils prevailing social taboo of that time while the other reason was to get ‘Mata Sita’ back in her ‘original form’.

This excerpt shows the psychology of role conflict in a person and its application in the most justified form. One role expects ‘Lord Rama’ to be an accountable king who adheres to public demands, while the other role is of being a responsible and a caring husband. If the role as king is overseen, the law and order in a province may get at stake owing a big loss to society and if the role as husband is overseen, there would be a moral injustice big personal

loss. The episode in its exemplar form is an event of role conflict and the balanced way to overcome it.

3. Emotional Stability and Ability of Adjustment

'Lord Rama' is a character showing high emotional stability even in the toughest times. This capability can be witnessed during 1) Being crowned as the king of Ayodhya, 2) Ordered 14-year exile, 3) During fatal injury of beloved brother 'Lakshmana' at the battlefield to name a few. During the crowning, an egoist does not emerge out of King of Ayodhya (Rama) nor does helplessness or sorrow hover over Rama on during the injury of 'Lakshmana'.

The episode of 'order of exile' has been quoted in detail as an example where one finds a stable and accepting temperament in 'Lord Rama' who does not lose personal peace of mind. A positive thought process is seen to be actively working in every possible negative situation. As the following excerpt of *Chand 40, Ayodhya Kanda* goes:

"Kaikeyi unhesitatingly spoke these pungent words, which callousness itself was sore distressed to hear. With the tongue for a bow, and words for so many shafts and with the king for a delicate target as it were, it looked as hard heartedness had assumed the form of a great hero and practised bowmanship. Having communicated the whole incident to the Lord of Raghus (Lord Rama). She sat like the very incarnation of heartlessness. The Sun of the solar dynasty, Lord Rama, the natural fountain of joy, smiled within Himself and spoke words which were free from all blemish and were so sweet and agreeable that they seemed to be the very ornaments of speech; "Listen, mother: That son alone is blessed, who is devoted to the words of his parents. A son who gratifies his father and mother is rare in this whole world, mother." (Ramcharitmanasa, Ayodhya Kanda, Chaupai 40)

"In the forest I shall get more opportunities of meeting hermits, which will be beneficial to me in everyway. On top of it I have my father's command and your approval to boot, mother." (Ramcharitmanasa, Ayodhya Kanda Doha 41)

"Again, Bharata, who is dear to me as life, will get the sovereignty: God is propitious to me in every respect today. If I refuse to proceed to the woods even under such circumstances, I should be reckoned foremost in an assembly of fools. Those who nurture a castor-oil plant leaving the tree of paradise and barter away nectar for poison, they too will not lose an opportunity like this should they ever get it: ponder this fact in your mind and realize it, mother. Only one thing pains me most, mother; I am grieved to see the king sore distressed. That my father should be so overwhelmed with grief over a trifling matter is more than I can believe, dear mother. The king is stout of heart and a fathomless ocean of goodness; I must have committed some great offence, which prevents the king from speaking out his mind to me. I adjure you, therefore, to tell me the truth." (Ramcharitmanasa, Ayodhya Kanda Chaupai 41)

Normally, emotional stability gets distorted during stressful and extreme situation, but this does not happen with 'Lord Rama'. On receiving the order of 14 years of exile, 'Lord Rama' does not get frustrated, rather accepted the terms and showed the positive aspects of the exile order to the family members present there. Ordinarily, one would get angry and start an argument but here, the incident was handled with a very peaceful approach. This stable emotional state is a highly learnable characteristic by not only the religious followers but

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also by complete mankind as researches also indicate that emotional stability mediates self-disclosure and social adjustment partially (Nehra & Rangnekar, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Taking a few examples from the epic 'Ramayana', the paper conceptualizes the interwoven episodes starring motivation, public accountability, feminine security, emotional stability and adjustment ability which not only enlightens the religious followers of 'Lord Rama' but also shows a better way of living and moral welfare universally. These temperaments and characteristics in a person also increase peace, level of mindfulness and remove the toll of cognitive dissonance from the mind. Simple living is more fruitful than loads of hustle in life which is highly promoted by the unique identity of 'Lord Rama' which ought to be learned by all.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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