



Leadership and Good Governance in Ramayana–Its Relevance in Contemporary Era

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ABSTRACT

Leadership and good governance in the Ramayana, exemplified by Rama focus on Dharmic management, emphasizing duty, ethical leadership, justice, and selflessness over personal ambition. Leadership is accountable in nature transparent and empowers subordinates' administrative duties to perform in running the state example Hanuman's accountability in maintaining Ramrajya a state characterized by peace, equality, and the rule of law. Rama acts as an ideal ruler adhering strictly to Rajdharma – the duties of a king where justice is tempered with empathy ensuring the welfare of all subjects. Leaders in the Ramayan are servants first focusing on the welfare of the people (people-centric) rather than power, as shown by Rama and Bharata's selfless service. Effective leaders recognize the potential of their subordinates for example Jambavan boosts to fly to Lanka, showing trust-based delegation. Rama showcases calm example with Sugriva and Vibhisan and meticulously planning the bridge construction demonstrating strategic thinking. The epic highlights that authority must be accountable and transparent as seen in the consultation with elders and the public before making decisions. Rama's disciplined rule is contrasted with Ravana's arrogant and tyrannical leadership which is driven by ego and leads to ultimate downfall of the mighty Lanka empire. Integrity, Inclusivity, and conflict mitigation are the principles of modern governance. Modern concept of good governance ensures justice, treats



individual equally from different grounds, committed to truth and moral values and provide right to information to individuals, vigilance against corrupt officials preferring diplomatic solutions and act justifiably in adverse situations as we find in the attempt to resolve crisis with Ravana through mediation, accommodation, co-operation, and compromise for attaining consensus.

I. Introduction

Good Governance today focuses on citizen-centric, transparent, and accountable administration, utilizing technology to improve public service delivery and reduce corruption. It prioritizes the rule of law, inclusive participation, and efficient evidence-based policy implementation to improve the quality of life. Modern governance emphasizes digital tools like Digi Locker to streamline bureaucracy and enhance transparency. Accountability and transparency are a process that ensure governments answer for their actions and decisions minimising corruption. Governance uses technology for faster, transparent, and accessible services. It encourages participation and inclusion of all citizens including vulnerable groups in decision-making. Governance is based on fair, impartial and legal frameworks. Governance is responsive and efficient promptly serving citizens and delivering services using minimal resources. Welfare state is a concept of government in which the state plays a key role in the protection of the economic and social well-being of its citizens. It is based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life. A welfare state is a community where state power is deliberately used to modify the normal play of economic forces to obtain a more equal distribution of income for every citizen. Good governance refers to a system in which the government not only fulfils all the common aspirations of its citizens but also promotes the wellbeing of the entire society. Leadership and good governance in the Ramayana, exemplified by Rama focus on Dharmic management, emphasizing duty, ethical leadership, justice, and selflessness over personal ambition. Leadership is accountable in nature transparent and empowers subordinates' administrative duties to perform in running the state example Hanuman's accountability in maintaining Ramrajya a state characterized by peace, equality, and the rule of law. Rama acts as an ideal ruler adhering strictly to Rajdharma – the duties of a king where justice is tempered with empathy ensuring the welfare of all subjects. Leaders in the Ramayan are servants first focusing on the welfare of the people (people-centric) rather than power, as shown by Rama and Bharata's selfless service. The epic highlights that authority must be accountable and transparent as seen in the consultation with elders and



the public before making decisions. Rama's disciplined rule is contrasted with Ravana's arrogant and tyrannical leadership which is driven by ego and leads to ultimate downfall of the mighty Lanka empire. Integrity, Inclusivity, and conflict mitigation are the principles of modern governance.

II. The Core Virtues of an Ideal Leader and Transformational Leadership Exhibited by Rama

Lord Rama is considered the ideal leader (Maryada Purushottama) in the Ramayana due to his unwavering commitment to dharma (righteousness), empathy, and selfless service. As a servant leader, he prioritized duty over personal comfort led by example, and fostered strong, respectful, and loyal relationships with his allies. Leadership qualities of Lord Rama include commitment to duty, servant leadership, leading role, empathetic and inclusive, strategic visionary, and emotional resilience. Rama places dharma above personal desire, comfort, or power as shown in his voluntary acceptance of exile to honour his father's word. Rama ensures justice as seen in his protection of sages and his decision to reward allies like Sugriva and Vibhishana (Brass.B.M,1985).

- Purpose driven Leadership (guided by values) – Shri Ram always chose principles over convenience. He walked away from the throne to honour a promise – not because it was easy but because it was right (Brass.B.M& Avolio.B.J,1994).
- Leadership through Sacrifice (putting others first) – Great leaders serve, they do not rule. Shri Ram's exile was not a fall – it was a rise in humility showing that real strength lies in putting the collective above the self.
- Empathetic Governance (listening, understanding, governance) - Every decision he made, even the tough ones reflected his deep connection with his people. He governed not from a palace, but from the pulse of his kingdom. Rama is deeply empathetic, caring for his subjects and allies alike, and showing humanity even towards his enemies such as requesting Vibhishana to perform Ravana's last rituals (ibid).
- Leading by Example (living the values you preach) – Discipline, integrity, loyalty – he embodied every virtue he expected from others. Leadership was not his title it was his character.
- Tactical Brilliance (foresight and strategy) – From forming the right alliance to orchestrating a complex campaign against Ravana, his strategic mind was always in motion. Leadership needs vision as much as it needs virtue (ibid).
- Empowering Others (trust and teamwork) – Whether it was Hanuman, Sugriva or even a tiny squirrel – every contribution was honoured. Shri Ram inspired greatness by trusting those around him.



- Emotional Strength (grace and pressure) – In pain, betrayal, or uncertainty, he never lost composure. He led with heart – balanced by strength guided by compassion.
- Resolving Conflicts with Wisdom (dialogue before war) – He believed in peace first. War was never his first choice, but when duty called, he stood firm and fair. He is a consultative leader, seeking advice from experts, elders and his team and making decisions with clarity.
- Grit and Endurance (staying the course) – He never wavered in exile, heartbreak or in war. His unwavering resolve lifted those around him to rise above their own limits. Despite enduring immense hardship, Rama remains steadfast in his goals, maintaining composure and focus during challenges.
- Leadership as Service (power with responsibility) – Even after victory, he ruled not as a conqueror but as a servant of the people. Leadership for him was never about command – it was about care.

The Ramayana highlights that the ideal leader is not just someone who holds power, but someone who adheres to high moral principles, serves the greater good and earns the trust of their followers.

The Core Virtues of an Ideal Leader: -

1. Kindness: Ram teaches that true strength is being kind when you have the power to be cruel. Leader should be assertive, not aggressive competitor and can win a deal without destroying the other person. Leaders (Chikkalikar, S,2003) must be compassionate and should not be fearful in his deeds.
2. Compassion in Action: Rama felt the pain of everyone from Jatayu to Shabari. Leader must understand why a team member is struggling to win through consensus because compassion builds loyalty for each other between the leader and other team mates.
3. Willingness to Listen: Leader should listen more than to speak as a lifelong learner. Leaders should seek mentorship from seniors and actively listen to them and to provide feedback to the juniors. Ability to listen is the superpower of a leader (ibid).
4. Integrity: Ethics of a leader should not be compromised for short-term gains because character of the leader is important than talent according to Rama.
5. Self-control: Leaders should control his impulses and actions even in moments of immense grief or power. Ram's action was disciplined, guided by self-controlled mind that acts as a firewall between bad impulse and a permanent regret (ibid).
6. Tranquillity: The ability to remain calm amidst chaos is a quality of a good leader and to have patience even in worst situation to find a solution of the problem.



7. **Selfless Loyalty:** Lakshman gave up 14 years of his life not for power or a title but out of pure love and duty. His service was unconditional support a good leader's vision and multiplying Rama's team and great careers are often built by making others successful.
8. **Duty:** Dharma of the ruler is considered as duty of the leader to his people. Bharat was given an entire kingdom, but he refused to own it. He ruled as a trustee not a king placing Rama's sandals on the throne as a symbol that he was merely a caretaker. Bharat's example is a piercing reminder that true honour lies in stewardship, not ownership (ibid).
9. **Commitment:** Sita lord Rama's wife chose to take life in exile with her husband in hardship as a commitment to the journey together. True partner whether with soulmates or fellow team members or people must stand by the leader in all circumstances and through all times (ibid).

Transformational Leadership Exhibited by Rama: -

1. Transformational leaders are change agents. They strive to bring the desired changes to improve their state, society, and country. They bring changes to the expectations, attitudes, behaviours, and goals of their followers (Krishan.V. R,1990).
2. Transformational leaders are courageous people. Once they take a stand, they are brave to take risks, ensure vision till the goals are achieved (ibid).
3. Transformational leaders believe in people. They have a very positive approach towards all people. They believe in the innate ability and motivation of the people and empower them. They believe that there is an infinite potential in every people.
4. Transformational leaders are value driven. They have asset of core values, which serve as their driving force and permeate their actions. This is seen in Shri Rama, who never deviated or deviates from the words he had and has given (ibid).
5. Transformational leaders are lifelong learners. They view mistakes not as failures but as learning experiences. They have an amazing appetite for continuous self-learning and development. In the life of Shri Rama, we see a perfect example of life of learner.
6. Transformational leaders could deal with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty. They have all the requirements of an increasingly complex world that demand complex problem-solving ability on the part of the leaders. Shri Rama clearly exhibits this ability when he had to make the painful decision to banish Sita from Ayodhya (ibid).



7. Transformational leaders are visionaries. They have broad and inspiring visions. The visions are translated into missions and goals. Sri Ram created future vision for Ayodhya and the vision was clearly communicated to the people of Ayodhya before leaving to the forest (ibid).

III. Concept of Good Governance in Ramayana:

The system of ram Rajya can be defined as a system of administration or governance which is based on democratic system where the rulers' rule for the pleasure of people. The system where equal rights will prevail for everyone, irrespective of class and violence cannot be a medium to achieve justice. Ram formulated his principles of governance based on the will of the people. The era of ram Rajya was considered the most perfect because every person, irrespective of any category adheres the rule of dharma and hence lived in peace and harmony. In simple terms, the entire concept of ram Rajya is centred on the concept of good governance. The concept of governance is not new (Krishnan.V. R,1990). It is as old as human civilization. Simply put governance means; the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented. The governance process must also be just reasonable, fair and citizen caring. To achieve these qualities a good governance, the machinery of governance must also be accountable and responsible. Since governance is a process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision.

Good Governance in the Ramayana often referred to as ram Rajya, focuses on maximizing happiness, justice, and prosperity for all citizens (ibid) through righteous leadership and strict adherence to dharma (moral duty).

Dimensions of Good Governance according to Ramayana: -

1. Dharma-Centric Leadership: The leader Rama operates with high integrity, duty, (Chikhalikar,S,2003) and self-discipline, prioritizing the welfare of the people over personal desires.
2. Rule of Law: Ram Rajya is characterized by justice and equity where law is supreme and equal for all citizens including the king.
3. Citizen Welfare and Participation: Governance focuses on public opinion, inclusivity, and welfare, ensuring everyone is protected and happy.



4. Accountability and Transparency: Rulers are accountable to the public and maintain transparent decision-making.
5. Economic Security and Prosperity: Proper management of the treasury, fair taxation, timely payments to officials and environmental preservations (example – protection of forests) were priorities.
6. Ethical Conflict Resolution: The importance of forgiveness, diplomatic efforts (such as sending envoys) and resolving conflicts peacefully. The timeless framework ensures social harmony and sustainable peace by balancing personal responsibilities with public obligations.

IV. The Ramayana: A Leadership and Governance Perspective in Contemporary Era

Good governance today focuses on creating a participatory, transparent, and accountable administration to ensure citizen-centric service delivery, inclusive development, and the rule of law. Good governance includes digital initiatives, anti-corruption measures, and decentralization to enhance efficiency and equity (<http://www.pib.gov.in>). Good governance day 25th of December, marks efforts to improve state-level performance throughout the nation. India's good governance focuses on: -

- Transparency and Accountability: Provides free flow of information and open decision-making process. Initiatives like Digital India and e-governance platforms (Aadhaar, UPI) have involved transparency, reduced corruption and enhanced public service access. Implementation of the Right to Information Act, Citizen Charters, and the setting up of anticorruption bodies like Lokpal and Lokayutta enhanced transparency in governance. Programs launched under e-governance – PRAGATI, Digital India Platform, Passport Seva Kendra, Online IT Return etc. (<http://www.pib.gov.in>)
- Participation and Inclusiveness: Ensuring active involvement of citizens including marginalized groups in decision making. It strengthens local self-governance (Panchayati Raj Institutions) to facilitate greater public participation. The participation of local governance people through gram sabha and gram sansad in rural areas make governance more citizen friendly and inclusive where the people could express their wants to the government. Centralised Planning Commission was abolished, replacing it with the think tank called the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Ayog) which ushered in an era of 'co-operative federalism.' The Aspirational District Programme (ADP) was launched in January 2018 to transform the lives of people in the under-developed areas of the country in a time bound manner. The programme aimed at transforming 115 most backward districts



with focused interventions in the field of health and nutrition, education, agriculture and waste management, financial inclusion, and skill development. (<http://www.pib.gov.in>)

- Rule of Law: Provides fair and impartial legal frameworks such as independent judiciary. It simplifies procedures by weeding out obsolete law's and reducing compliance burdens to enhance "Ease of Doing Business." Steps were taken by the government to improve business conditions including legislation meant to improve the country's business environment and policy ecosystems (such as bankruptcy code, the goods and service taxes or GST, and the anti-money laundering law). Government has launched the 'Make in India' initiative for business transactions. (<http://www.pib.gov.in>)
- Responsiveness and Efficiency: Provides timely service delivery and optimal resource usage. The responsiveness of media communication involves citizens in governance through the program – 'maan ki baat'. Modernizing police forces and implementing the Model Police Act of 2015, introducing filling e-FIRs for minor offences. (<http://www.pib.gov.in>)
- Consensus-Oriented: Mediation of diverse interests for collective welfare. Today administration is more about 'governance' than 'government.' It is consensus-based administration as we find through participatory governance where the local people are allowed to make and implement decisions. (<http://www.pib.gov.in>)

Good Governance Index (<http://www.ncgg.org.in>) was launched on Good Governance Day on 25th December, 2019. GGI is a uniform tool across states to assess the status of governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the state government and union territories. The objective of GGI is to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and union territories to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration.

The epical framework of Ramayana offers indigenous alternatives to Western governance theories. Where liberal democracies emphasize on individual rights (<http://www.cgg.gov.in>) and electoral mechanisms, 'Shri Ram' focuses on duty, ethics, and administrative efficiency. Yet both covers on certain pillars of rule of law, accountable leadership, and professional bureaucracy. Institutions such as the World Bank assess (<http://mygov.in>) governance through six dimensions: - voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. These indicators find resonance in the Ram Rajya, albeit through culturally embedded formulations. Ramayana's thought encourages reimagining governance, not just through institutional redesign but also



through value-based orientation. This is crucial in addressing the democratic deficit, policy capture, and declining civic trust in contemporary Indian society.

V. Conclusion

Rama's system of administration was a true democracy. He was an ideal king, self-disciplined, obedient, dutiful, patient, dignified, a man of ideal character abiding by law and a well co-ordinator. Ram Rajya covers all aspects of democracy ensuring justice to all the people. According to principles of governance during Ramayana, the concept of democracy can only be realized if justice is made ubiquitous. According to Rama, a critical factor in good governance is the quality of ministers. Rama's administration shows the presence of courageous, knowledgeable, strong-willed men with a high emotional feeling as ministers – a key towards effective governance. Ram as a ruler ensures several benefits like provides good irrigation facilities to the peasants rather than depending on rains, provides financial assistance during droughts or famines or in other unfavourable social conditions. To be precise concept of governance in Ramayana is “to provide the maximum happiness for the maximum number of people, for the maximum period based on the principles of ‘dharma’ righteousness and moral values.” Ayodhya Kanda in Ramayana emphasize on the importance of ethical leadership, justice, accountability, and a moral directive for rulers across generations. Amid political turmoil and ethical dilemmas in today's world these ancient teachings inspire the leaders to prioritize dharma (rulers' duty) and the well-being of their subjects above all. Sri Rama exemplifies true leadership lies in upholding justice and ensuring harmony in society. Ramayana's principles of ‘Dharma (duty)’, ‘Raj-Dharma’ (governance ethics and the duty of the ruler) and ‘Ram Rajya’ offer a timeless model for modern governance emphasizing accountability, empathy, and integrity over personal interest. Key concept includes citizen-centric welfare, ethical leadership, accountable government, anti-corruption, and inclusive decision making. ‘Dharma’, in Ramayana shows the ‘path of rule’ and to protect and guide the citizen with courage, wisdom and compassion. The concept of good governance in Ramayana and today's world is about transforming the government from a regulatory body into an enabling, service-oriented entity that improves the quality of life for its citizen.

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