Ethics and Code of Conduct in Indian Scriptures

In numerous works of Indian literature, including the Bhagavad Gita, Kautilya’s Arthashastra, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana, the current notions of management vision and mission, reaching goals, decision-making procedures, and planning have all been discussed elaborately. Our venerable and age-old epic “Ramayana” has consistently demonstrated extraordinary ability to define a righteous leader, an inside-out management strategy, and how an individual should behave under various circumstances and situations.

We can see that ethics and values are deeply rooted in the ancient wisdom of our country, and Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bhagavad Gita are excellent examples of how these values have been passed down through generations. The ethics and values described in these epics have come a long way in adapting to the constantly changing environment. The evolving nature of today’s world raises concerns about how society and businesses should handle their increased ethical sensitivity and competition to thrive.

WHAT RAMAYANA TEACHES US ABOUT ETHICS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

In numerous works of Indian literature, including the Bhagavad Gita, Kautilya’s Arthashastra, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana, the current notions of management vision and mission, reaching goals, decision-making procedures, and planning have all been discussed elaborately. Our venerable and age-old epic “Ramayana” has consistently demonstrated extraordinary ability to define a righteous leader, an inside-out management strategy, and how an individual should behave under various circumstances and situations. For instance, the Ramayana criticises “Ram Rajya,” which created sophisticated systematic management systems relating to hierarchy, teams, and division of labour. In order to defeat evil, Lord Rama long ago established many yardsticks in his personal and managerial spheres. As he defeated the evils, it might be inferred that our previous era was painfully similar to the one we are currently experiencing. In the current professional scenario, his methods and applications of theories have been incarnated with new terminologies. His dharma fostered a sense of moral principles, and his karma demonstrated “Ram Rajya.”

Lord Krishna from our epic “Mahabharata” possessed 16 traits of a great person and is termed “Purnapurush,” whereas Lord Rama had all 13 qualities of a great person and is called “Maryadapurushottam.” Lord Rama has been seen as practising transformational leadership for more than 5000 years, as well as social and ethical management. Let us go deep into the relevance of Indian Ethos, Values and Principles of Ramayana to the modern ethical scenarios.

The Ramayana is indeed one of the greatest epics of Indian mythology and literature, composed by the sage Valmiki.

INTRODUCTION

Ethics essentially denotes “doing the right thing”. We all live in a society, and we all have several roles to play, daily, at our homes, at our offices, at wherever we travel, when we attend meetings and so on. Each of our roles expect some codes of conduct, some ways of ethical behaviour from us. We are expected to act in some particular ethical manners every time, and much of it comes practices and Code of Conducts followed down the ages. In fact, we derive much of our Codes of Conduct through various scriptures, and this article is a sincere attempt to capture such pearls of wisdom handed down to us through the ages.
It tells the story of Lord Rama, an incarnation of the God Vishnu, and his journey to rescue his wife, Sita from the demon king, Ravana. The epic is not only a gripping tale of adventure and heroism but also a profound source of philosophical, moral, and spiritual insights.

**ETHICAL VALUES FROM RAMAYANA**

**Truthfulness:** The Ramayana stresses the importance of truthfulness in all aspects of life. Lord Rama always spoke the truth, even when it was not convenient. He never lied to his allies or subjects and always upheld the truth, even at the cost of his own happiness.

**Honesty:** Honesty is another ethical value emphasized in the Ramayana. Lord Rama and his brothers always upheld honesty and never indulged in any deceitful activities. Honesty was a fundamental aspect of their character. This trait can be found throughout Ramayana.

**Compassion:** Compassion is another ethical value that is highlighted in the Ramayana. Lord Rama was a compassionate ruler who cared for the welfare of his subjects, and considerate of their needs and working towards their well-being. He always went out of his way to help those in need.

**Forgiveness:** Forgiveness is an essential ethical value that is taught in the Ramayana. Lord Rama forgave even his enemies and treated them with kindness and respect. He taught us that forgiveness is a powerful tool that can bring peace and harmony in society.

**Self-control:** Self-control is another ethical value that is emphasized in the Ramayana. Lord Rama always exercised self-control in his thoughts, actions, and emotions. He remained calm and composed in all situations, even in the face of extreme provocation.

**Integrity:** Lord Rama was a man of integrity. He was true to his word and never compromised on his principles. We must exhibit a high degree of integrity in our dealings with stakeholders.

**Fairness:** Lord Rama was fair in his dealings with his allies and subjects, listening to their concerns and addressing them impartially. Following this trait, we must be fair in our decisions and treat all stakeholders equally.

**Accountability:** Lord Rama held himself accountable for the welfare of his subjects, taking responsibility for his actions and ensuring that his allies and subordinates did the same. Taking cue from the same, we must hold ourselves and our subordinates accountable for our decisions and actions. We must take ownership of our responsibilities and deliver on our promises.

**Empathy:** Lord Rama was a compassionate ruler who cared for the welfare of his subjects. He was considerate of their needs and worked towards their well-being. Accordingly, we must exhibit empathy towards our stakeholders, must understand their concerns and address them with compassion and sensitivity.

**Respect:** Lord Rama treated everyone with respect, regardless of their social status. He valued the opinions of his advisors and treated them with dignity. Following this virtue, we must exhibit respect towards our stakeholders, valuing their opinions, treating them with dignity, and showing them respect they deserve.

**ETHICAL EXAMPLES THAT WE DERIVE FROM RAMA**

Rama lived as a human being, and faced the day-to-day situations and conflicts of life. Sri Rama is a perfect role model. Rama entertained differences of opinion or dissent or oppositions and was kind and acted in just with them, which inspired people to face adversities in life circumstances. His serenity in success and tragedy is an excellent example to follow. Human life is often lost while chasing materialism, artha, and sensory pleasures known as the kāma. It further emphasizes that the pursuits of artha and kāma must be very well within the frames of righteousness or dharma. Moksha or liberation is considered the final goal, and to attain this, artha and kāma are relinquished by strictly adhering to dharmic life. It further depicts that, for positive mental health, dharma can be a significant theme in productive and content life. Many conflicts in life can be resolved using this perspective. Rama is considered beyond any religious connotation. Salient qualities of Rama can be summarized as follows:

- Have faith and love for your work, not your position
  Rama was ready to serve his father and even though he had the opportunity to become the king, when his father gave him exile, Rama did his duty.

- Rama remained wedded and staunchly loyal to his only wife, Sita. But, with his patience and practice, he stood firmly for his values and remained the greatest king in the history of India.

- Have an aim in life—Ramayana teaches us to have a good purpose in life. If we have a drive, we can
stimulate our minds to do the work or fulfill our dream. Honesty should be part of life and way of life and should be reflected in a person’s actions towards oneself, family, goals, society, culture, rituals and practices.

- The adverse situation in life—if we correctly take negative of life. These unfavorable situations make us strong.
- At the time of his exile, he pursues his potentials, self-fulfilment, personal growth, the peak experience of transcendence.
- Be careful of temptations and follow instructions, do not alter plans arbitrarily.

Ramayana teaches us about the importance of integrity, fairness, accountability, empathy, respect, and ethics, which are fundamental principles of ethics. The epic’s characters and stories have become a part of the Indian cultural landscape and continue to inspire us even today. Ramayana is a testament to the enduring power of wisdom and spiritual values and provides us with a roadmap to lead a life of purpose, meaning, and fulfilment. By imbibing the ethical principles derived from the Ramayana, modern-day leaders can become ethical and moral exemplars and lead their organizations to greatness.

The Indian ethical values have relevance in the past, present, and future. Ancient wisdom in the form of teachings helps a human develop inner peace (shanti) and happiness (sukha) through the belief that work is worship, duty is god/godly then whatever the obstacles are awaiting in life. The inner strength can aid in understanding and solving problems rationally, which will help in enjoying life despite all hurdles. This need not be viewed as just an epic; instead, Ramayana can act as a medium of education to address the significance of ethics and values like honesty, respect, self-assessment, rational decision-making, and the importance of family, society, and people with special needs, and ethos. Systematic research is a need for culturally oriented modules of nonpharmacological management of mental disorders. The Ramayana contains mental therapeutic wisdom. It will remain an epic that is timeless and will also have lessons for all ages in the future.

**MAHABHARATHA, THE OCEAN OF WISDOM, STATECRAFT AND ETHICS**

The Epilogue to Mahabharatha proudly proclaims “Whatever is here, may be found elsewhere; what is cannot be found anywhere else,”(18:56-33). And for centuries the famous blessing of Gandhari, before the start of war, to Duryodhana, her son an epitome of unrighteousness, that Yatho dharma thatho jayah, i.e where there is righteousness surely there will be victory, this is the guiding force for centuries not only for India but for whole world. In the Udyoga Parva of Mahabharatha Chapter 33-40 with around 500 slokas contain much quoted Vidura Neethi which is a huge collection of how one should conduct in this world, ethically and socially and thereby contribute to
Bhagavath Githa (BG) defines a perfect human being, one who is free from malice towards none in this world, friendly towards all, free from enmity, serene in mind, pure of body, non-stealing, control of senses, study of subjects, non-violence in thoughts, words and deeds, honesty, indulging in actions without worrying about results, keeping equipoised in all circumstances, compulsory performance of prescribed actions /duties and not leaving them in the name of renunciation.

world peace, prosperity and all time goodness. It begins with characteristics of wise man which has huge relevance to the life of a professional like CS. Some of the characteristics of a wise man as given therein are reproduced below:

“They exert to the best of their might and act to the best of their might and disregard nothing as insignificant, they are called wise.”

“He who exulteth not at honours, and grieveth not at slights, and remaineth cool and unagitated like a lake in the course of Ganga, is reckoned as wise.”

“He who speaketh boldly, can converse on various subjects, know the science of argumentation, possesseth geniuses and interpret the meaning of what is written in books is reckoned as wise.”

“Before one engageth in an act, one should consider the competence of the agent, the nature of the act itself, and its purpose, for all acts are dependent on these. Considering these one should begin an act, and not take it up on a sudden impulse.”

Consideration for ones parents and looking after them in their old age is considered as highest virtue as can be seen in Vyadha Gita, where a butcher is passing the test of virtue even though his deeds are apparently sinful but his conduct, respect towards his old and infirm parents earn him a place in heaven ad at the same time a sagely boy, renounces his home and leaves his parents in pursuit of so called virtue is frowned upon by wise men and he is advised to look after his parents.

One of the best examples of professional ethical behaviour is found in Duryodhana consulting Sahadeva for knowing the best auspicious time for start of war despite the latter was in enemy camp and at the same time one of the best astrologer available. We have to learn a lot from such professional ethical behaviour found in our epics.

During the disrobing of Draupadi episode, highly learned Bhishma and all powerful Dronacharya remained silent throughout the event despite pleading by Draupadi and her questioning the silence despite knowing the correct stand that should have been taken. This shows a professional should never be a silent spectator to wrong and unlawful activities but speak his mind out in his own way and never give in to so called loyalty to management at the cost of company or organisation which he serves.

BHAGAVATH GITA- A MILCHING COW FOR ETHICAL LEARNING

Bhagavath Githa (BG) defines a perfect human being, one who is free from malice towards none in this world, friendly towards all, free from enmity, serene in mind, pure of body, non-stealing, control of senses, study of subjects, non-violence in thoughts, words and deeds, honesty, indulging in actions without worrying about results, keeping equipoised in all circumstances, compulsory performance of prescribed actions /duties and not leaving them in the name of renunciation.

Lord Krishna makes fun of Arjuna’s misplaced sympathy for his relatives and friends and Krishna taunts Arjuna that he speaks like a very learned person but when the valour in battlefield is to be exercised it appears as if he runs away from battle. One has to perform ones allotted duties, in the present world whatever comes to us through our studies, endeavour and exercise of skill and we should excel in skill, that is the most important message. Skill in action is verily Yoga (Yoga Karmasu Kausalam). Even a little performance of one’s duties saves one from great fear. BG also advises us not to take up others allotted duties even though our duties apparently appear to be inferior, for that matter no duty is inferior or superior.

The greatest assurance Lord gives in BG is that doer of good never comes to grief. He will be rewarded sooner or later, even though sometimes the grace comes mysteriously without our knowledge.

Thus, we can see that our epics are storehouse of wisdom, ethics and behaviour training. Its high time that such immense knowledge should form part of our curriculum at school, college and professional level so that who ever gets a chance to learn them turn out to be worthy citizens who contribute to overall growth of country and contribute to world peace and harmony and makes a better world to live in.

CONCLUSION

We have only taken a few examples and quotes pertaining to ethics from Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bhagavad Gita. Besides these, there are various thoughts on ethics and codes of conduct that can be found in Vedas, Upanishads, and ancient texts like Thirukkural, Thiruppugazh, Srimad Bhagavatham etc. We can come across several issues or concerns in our daily life, for which solutions can be found in these Scriptures and Texts. Its upto us to study such Scriptures and Texts in detail and find out hidden Pearls of Wisdom, which lead us to live an ethical life.

REFERENCES:

i. The Bhagavad Gita
ii. The Ramayana
iii. The Mahabharatha
iv. The Vidhura Neethi