

A Comparative Study of the Strategies and Lessons of Two Great Indian Epics: Mahabharata and Ramayana

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Abstract

The Vedas and the Puranas along with two great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata constitute the solid and enduring foundation of age long and magnificent edifice of Indian culture and civilization. The ever-lasting appeal of these treatises still influences, to a great extent, the cultural life and behaviour-pattern of crores of Indians.

Ramayana and Mahabharata are considered as two of the best epics in India. Over the years, different authors from different backgrounds have tried to explore these two epics from various aspects. But among all these aspects management is a topic that has not yet been thoroughly analyzed, keeping these two epics in mind. A business strategy is the means by which it sets out to achieve its desired goal. Strategies are also concerned with deciding on what products to allocate major resources or ensure a win in a given challenge. Therefore, the aim of this research paper is to explore the various management lessons that can be learnt from Ramayana and Mahabharata, for enhancing managerial effectiveness. We have also discussed various strategic management models under the broad headings of generic strategies, competitive/red ocean strategies, monopoly/blue ocean strategies, sustainability/green ocean strategies, unethical/black ocean strategies and combined/white ocean strategies, their bases in Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. The strategies used in Indian epics as examples for various modern strategies are analysed and their instances and implementations are discussed. Finally, based on the analysis of all strategies, it is concluded that white ocean mixed strategy can be accepted as global strategy for the winners.

These two epics are the pride of Hinduism. But comparing them would be like comparing chalk with cheese. Though both send a similar message, yet they have a contrasting character and nature of handing their subjects. There is many learning that can be done based on such epics and many can still be compared to various events happening in corporate world today

such as, quality vs quantity, commitment, spiritual quotient requisites in an individual, women empowerment etc.

Keywords: *Mahabharata, management, Indian-culture, epic, leader, Srikrishna, planning, goal, Managerial Effectiveness, Leadership, Strategy in Indian philosophy, Management.*

1. Introduction

Indian management thought based on Indian Ethos will not only help Indian organizations to become effective and globally competitive but has much to offer to the world in general. The present scenario indicates that unless the Indian management practices are blended with the Indian cultural ethos adequately, the corporate India may not be able to cope with the management challenges in the globalised milieu. There are many lessons and strategies to be learnt from our own traditions and the vast knowledge in the ancient “Dharmshastras” can enable us to adapt and Indianize the western techniques to our way of living. As a matter of fact, there exists a need to explore the Indian epics, scriptures and the literature for the managerial philosophy and thought. Management of any type, whether in business or in some other human activity, is an act through which people are brought together to work for achieving a desired goal. Generally, management is defined by the following five functions as Planning, Organizing, Leading, Controlling and Coordinating. These points are worked upon keeping in context the Ramayana and Mahabharata

The *Ramayana* (ram-EYE-ya-na) and the Mahabharata (ma-ha-BA-ra-ta), the great Indian epics, are among the most important works of literature in South Asia and also the source of the spiritual, cultural, sociological, and political and the artistic inspiration for ages for the people of India. Both contain important lessons on wisdom, behavior and morality, and have been used for centuries not only as entertainment, but also as a way of instructing both children and adults in the exemplary behavior toward which they are urged to strive and the immoral behavior they are urged to shun.

The *Ramayana* is the story of Rama, the crown prince of ancient Ayodhya, and an earthly incarnation of the Hindu god, Vishnu. He is also the hero of the poem, whose focus is the epic telling of Rama's quest. In this lesson, students will read an abridged version of the *Ramayana*, and will explore the ways in which the story of Rama contains elements, such as the **Epic Hero Cycle**, that place it within the epic poetry tradition.

The Mahabharat is not a management text. However, Indian sages, in their instruction to the king, insisted upon the proper planning, strategy, decision making human and natural resource management, agriculture and trade. People were advised to live in harmony with all natural forces, and also not excessively disturb the balance of an organisation. Training to be a pious person starts in a family and should continue throughout the journey of life. The morale of kings, journals, administrators, planners, and policy-makers of that particular period will guide us fo the uplifting the society as well as in business world.

Management is a process that involves integrating and coordinating the work of others so that the goals of an organization can be achieved efficiently and effectively. It is interdisciplinary field with contributions from various subjects such as Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Economics and Finance. Contemporary management also includes issues related to cross- cultural management and international management. Increasingly the understanding of management is coming to depend on analysing and predicting organizational behaviour which is the basis for human resource management. The earliest civilization flourished because of the organised human efforts, so management of men has

naturally received much importance and attention in human society. Applicability of ancient Indian concept in modern business management is of relevance because of the fact that without strong management techniques India could not have seen an organized and culturally advanced civilization. The Indian culture throughout was very much organized and had its own leadership style and management system. The Indian epics inspire every manager and leader to reflect, investigate and cogitate.

2. Management lessons: Mahabharata

- **Preparation:** you need to do proper preparation Pandavas for the war did a proper preparation & turned their weakness into their strength

For example: Arjuna set out on a mission to acquire divyastras, Yuthisthira acquired teachings from different Rishis. In management also we need to do proper preparation so as to acquire certain goals without preparation nothing can be achieved, so try to “Turn your weakness into your Strength.”

- **Allies:** It deals with interpersonal relationship. Maintain good relation with everyone in the organization. Also build a good network with the outsider of the organization as because you never know who will be helpful to you in future.

For example: Pandavas; No wealth. No power of their own. But they had made powerful allies all over India

- Panchala through Marriage with Darupadi.
- Dwarka through marriage with Arjuna and Subhadra.
- Magadh through marriage of Shadeva and Vijaya.
- Chedi through marriage of Nakula and Karenmayi.
- Kasi through marriage of Bhima and Balandhara.
- Kekaya through marriage of Yudhisthira and Devika.
- Matsya through marriage of Abhimanyu and Uttara.
- The Rakshasas through marriage of Bhima and Hidimba.
- The Nagas through marriage of Arjuna and Uloopi.

- **Leadership:** A good example of distributed leadership is seen in war of Mahabharata, likewise if in organizations also it has been followed then it will be beneficial to both the individual as well as to the organization. A good leader will always Share responsibilities so that he/she can focus on their work & achieve the goal.

For example: Pandavas had distributed leadership. Seven commanders for the seven divisions (1 man command 1 akshouhini)

- Virat (King of Matsya).
- Drupad (King of Pancala).
- Sahadeva(King of Magadha).
- Dhrshtaketu (King of Chedi).
- Satyaki (Only warrior from Dwarka).
- Shikhandi (Prince of Pancala).
- Dhrshtadymna — Commander in Chief.
- Arjuna —Supreme Commander.
- Krishna — Arjuna’s charioteer and counselor.

- **Team spirit:** The employees should be trained to achieve a common goal. There should be a feeling of team spirit, if it is not present in the employees than they will work individually not as a team.

For example: kauravas were not having team spirit as all of them fought their individual wars, Bhishma fought for his vow to protect the throne of Hastinapur, Karna fought to prove his mantle against Arjuna & friendship of Duryodhana

- **Individual motives:** There should be a common goal but the individual had their individual targets, their own agendas which should become one with the teams' agenda.

For example: Pandavas had given all the individuals their goal they have decided who will try to kill whom

- **Commitment:** The Mahabharata also teaches an important lesson for management that is commitment, if one is not committed towards their goal then will not achieve it.

For example: Abhishmalyu, a 16 year old kid ventured beyond enemy lines alone. This was a suicide mission but he still went in alone, and took a great part of the army down with him. It took the combined efforts of the 7 Maharathis to take him down.

Krishna took up arms twice and almost entered the War, in spite of his promise, only to be stopped by Arjuna.

- **Right manager:** How to become a right manager must be learnt from Mahabharata as Krishna & Yudhishthira both are said as a right manager. A right manager knows the competitors' weaknesses and exploits them. Take calculated risks. Inspire, invigorate, and counsel the team in moments of need. A right manager is a person who can answer all the questions of the team why, when & how etc. Good managers need to analyze all the aspects and then take the action.

For example: Yudhishthira, a low-key strategist on the first day of the War he played a Master game, went over to the Enemy side to seek blessings from Elders. In reality he made a covert deal with them, wherein all of them agreed to help him and unfolded the secrets of defeating them. While coming back he took a calculated risk. He made an offer to all the assembled people to change sides if they agreed, he knew very well that there is a lack of group cohesiveness among the Kauravas.

- **Women empowerment:** Any team without women is unbalanced as masculine traits of aggression and dominance due to which decisions taken may get wrong so to balance feminine traits of harmony and sustenance need to be there in a team decision.

For example: Kunti was the authority supreme for the Pandavas & Draupadi was a companion in whatever the Pandavas did whereas on part of Kauravas no woman was there in the decision-making process. Gandhari retreated to the Inner Chambers. Nobody listened to her.

3. Management Lessons from the characters in Ramayana

- **Team motivation is vital:** Jambavan motivating Hanuman is a classic example of a good manager helping his personnel to realize their potential and acting accordingly.
- **SWOT Analysis:** First thing which Hanuman did after reaching Lanka was to do a complete study about the Lankans, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, the various threats and opportunities which he had in the enemy's camp.
- **Value your subordinates:** Ravana has shown the signs of a bad manager, and hence led to the demise of his kingdom. From the start itself he ignored the suggestions of his managers and got his kingdom in the state of war with Ram.
- **Believe in your team:** The Rakshasa army was a powerful one. In contrast, the army of Rama was aboriginal tribes who had never encountered a sophisticated army before. Yet Rama maintained confidence in the ability of his army to surmount this seemingly impossible odd and enthused by his confidence his army fought to achieve victory.

- **Excellence in execution:** The plan to locate Sita gets brilliantly executed by Hanuman. The wisdom with which he conducts the search and the single-minded pursuit of the goal is an example worth emulating by managers at all levels.
- **Clarity in vision:** Rama's army of Vanaras had a clear vision of defeating Ravana's demon army in war and rescue Sita.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Lord Rama always interacted freely with the people in his kingdom and developed relations with his subjects no matter what their social status or background was. He treated everyone equally with respect and courtesy.
- **Innovation:** The best example for innovation can be seen in the building of the highly non conventional Ram Setu bridge that spanned the immense gap from India to Lanka, which helped the Vanaras army to reach Lanka and defeat Ravana's army in war.
- **Not to Disclose Secret:** As per in the Ramayana we found that Raavan did a mistake that he disclosed the secret of his death to his younger Vibhishan which later on resulted into Raavan's death. Similarly in business there are many secrets that not to be disclosed.

4. The Detailed comparisons of two great epics: Mahabharata and Ramayana

- **Relationships:** If Ramayana has harmonic, beautiful relationships then Mahabharata has ugly, awful relationships. In family whenever there is warm relationship, then a comparison with Ramayana is made and whenever there is cold relationship between the family members, it is said Mahabharata is occurring in that family.
- **Characteristics of God:** Lord Vishnu came to the world as Ram in 'Ramayana' and Krishna in 'Mahabharata'. But like the two epics, they both were poles apart. Lord Ram was an idealistic person in every aspect. He was exemplary in every way; he was an ideal son, ideal husband, and ideal brother. In one term he was Purushottam. In contrast, Lord Krishna has a different nature. He was very mischievous in his childhood stealing butter and troubling all the village girls. Then he started his 'leela' with Radha. Afterwards, he married so many women like Rukmini, Satyabhama, Jambavati to name a few while Lord Ram had only one wife and did not think of any other woman. However, in some areas Lord Krishna was ahead of Lord Ram. Lord Krishna was the complete incarnation of the Lord. Hence, he had many magical powers like lifting the mountain on his little finger etc. So if Lord Ram was idealistic then Lord Krishna was realistic. In today's world following Lord Krishna's views or Bhagavad Gita will be the perfect guide for us.
- **Laxman vs Balaram:** Laxman was a truly devoted brother. He always followed Lord Ram everywhere and anywhere. In contrast, Balaram didn't follow Lord Krishna so devotedly. For example, Balaram was more inclined towards Duryodhana than to any Pandava. Balaram wanted his Subhadra to be married to Duryodhana instead of Arjuna. Laxman was never inclined towards any evil person.
- **Central women:** Now consider the two women, Sita and Draupadi. Sita was pativrata, being completely devoted to her husband, while Draupadi had five husbands. Sita was very soft spoken and always ready to follow the instructions of her husband even if it was agnipariksha. But Draupadi was quite different. She had a loose tongue. For example, when Duryodhana was fooled by the illusion of the Pandavas' palace in Indraprastha, Draupadi mocked him calling him blind. Also given Draupadi's characteristics, she would have never given agnipariksha. Also Sita, the incarnation of Goddess Laxmi, did more memorable works than her Dwapad Yuga's counterpart, Rukmini.

- **Villains:** The villains of both the epics were also different. Ravana was son of a Brahmin and hence, he was devoted to God. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. However, his ego got the better of him and he took the wrong path. This was not the case of Duryodhana. He hardly had any faith on any kind in God. Also unlike Ravana he did not have a boon from any God. However, both of them made the sin of hurting women which ultimately resulted in wars.
- **The great wars:** If we see the battle of Ram vs Ravan and Pandavas vs Kauravas, you will find many differences. In ‘Ramayana’ the war took place between demons and man (along with monkeys). In contrast, the Kurukshetra war took place between the relatives which is more difficult to understand. Also the war in ‘Ramayana’ was fair while in ‘Mahabharata’ many codes of the war were violated. In ‘Ramayana’, the Lord himself fought the war directly. But in ‘Mahabharata’ he was only a guide showing the Pandavas the right path rather than fighting on their behalf.

So from the differences it was clear that the two epics were poles apart. However, they have some similarities also. Both gave us the message of following dharma and to remove adharma. So we can conclude they were two individuals following different paths but had the same goal ie dharma.

5. Strategy Models and Indian Epics: A tool for Winners

When we study Indian epics, there are many instances where the modern strategic management models are used to face and solve problems. In this paper, we have narrated the instances of various strategic models used in the great epics of Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Bhagavad-Gita and co-related them to various strategic models mentioned in the table 1.

Table 1: Examples of various strategies used in Indian Epics

S.no	Business strategy	Examples in Indian epics
1.	Red Ocean strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Ramayana, the competition between Kaikeyee and Kausalya to establish their sons as king. • In Mahabharata, the competition between Pandava and Kaurava.
2.	Blue Ocean Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unique ability of Ravana to use Aeroplane called Pushpaka Vimana. • The uniqueness of Dharmaraja in maintaining truthfulness in Mahabharata story.
3.	Green Ocean Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The war between Vali and Sugreeva to solve their mis-understandings. • The war between Bheema and Jarasandha without using other forces
4.	Black Ocean Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Ramayana, the hero of the story, Srirama also followed this strategy to kill Wali, the king of Vanaras. • In Mahabharata, Srikrishna, the disguise of God, followed this strategy to kill Karna, the king of Vanga
5.	White Ocean Mixed Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Ramayana, the strategy used by Srirama to get back his wife Sita. • In Mahabharata, the strategy used by Lord Srikrishna is also mixed strategy.

6. Literature Review

According to Milton Friedman, “there is one and only one social responsibility of the business: to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.” (Milton Friedman, Sept 1970).

As per Prasad L.Kaipa, discriminant is the critical quality required for a leader, it has to be developed by trial and error and constant practice. Mahabharata epic is one work where all aspects of these parameters of leadership are evaluated through life experiences and decision making.

Chakravarthi.S.S says that Greed management is the ultimate game changer and it becomes possible only when virtue and ethics are held together. Srimd bhagvatam says that the manner in which Srikrishna elevated the confidence Arjuna to take the bow and arrow and use the lethal weapons to his own brothers and relatives shows that there is always aware that is being fought within and outside and what a leader should do is to overcome the ambivalence that the mind is trapped in arise according to the occasion and hence so his job to the rightful manner.

Newman and Girvan’s work (2004) to detect the communities in Victor Hugo’s Les Miserable is the first major effort to find the social network from narratives. Sack (2012) deduced the plot from network by using concepts of structural balance theory. Elson (2010) proposed dialogue based method to extract social network. Jayannavaretal. (2015) updated Elson’s approach by broadening the scope of conversation to social events.

Prasad. L Kaipa(2014) says about making wise decisions: leadership lessons from Mahabharata; is to help leaders to reflect on how to make difficult decisions by developing practical wisdom based on Indian traditions.

Jayen K. Thaker(2013) This article it is tried to discover whether in Indian mythology principles of management were present or not. Famous Indian mythological books like Mahabharat, Ramayan, Bhagwat Geeta

7. Objectives

This study discussed various business strategies and explores the various management lessons that can be learnt from Ramayana and Mahabharata, for enhancing managerial effectiveness. A comparative study of the two epic is also given to make the study complete. Mahabharata basically is a true teller of life. It never hides the ugly truth of life. Often it becomes mirror of human being to evaluate themselves. Now besides worshipping the great epic let we try to learn essential lessons of life from it. So that we can say after Dr Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyaya, an eminent Linguistic that India's great epic Ramayana and Mahabharata are a "must study" of all. According to him these two epic also belong to the best of ten epic of the world.¹

8. Methodology:

The study is based on secondary sources which include various eminent scholars innovative research based books and articles. Information is also taken from different websites and from the original text. Though there is a long debate between the two great epic of India - The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, which one is earlier, besides that the historian said that the writing of Mahabharata much older than the Ramayana so it may be said that the writing of Mahabharata started before than the Ramayana but ended up along with all of its extensions (praskhiptas) before the Mahabharata. So this paper tried to discussed various business strategies and explore the various management lessons that can be learnt from Ramayana and

Mahabharata, for enhancing managerial effectiveness. A comparative study of the two epic is also given to make the study complete

9. Conclusion

As valuable business assets, trade secrets play an important role in economic growth and fostering innovation, as they represent an important means for companies to appropriate the returns to investments in innovation. Ramayana and Mahabharata has interesting implications and lessons so these epics should not be just considered as a religious scriptures.

The idea which is concluded is- if we can keep Kotler, V.S P Rao , I.M Pandey, Azhar Kazami in our library why not Mahabharata and Ramayana? These epics are the depiction of great intellectual and strategicians mind which can simple be adopted for framing recent organizations policies and strategies” Epics are not meant only to be worshipped but to inculcate their sayings in in today’s business world.

This is according to the lessons learned in great Indian epics where the winners Pandavas in Mahabarata and Lord Srirama in Ramayana have used optimum mix of all modern strategies i.e., Red ocean, Blue ocean, Green ocean, and even Black ocean at appropriate time.

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