

Business Crisis due to Corona Virus Pandemic and Importance of Lessons from Ramayana



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In continuing fight with Corona Virus pandemic, there were forced lockdowns in many countries and severe restrictions were imposed in movements of man, machine and material. These have adversely impacted and created crisis situation for majority of the business sectors all over. In this business crisis situation which has shaken economy of majority of countries, lessons from Ramayana would certainly be of great importance. The Ramayana while depicting Lord Rama's life and struggles during various crisis situations carries many important management lessons. This paper highlights that lessons from Ramayana can be of great help to overcome present Business Crisis situations.

1. Introduction

At present, whole world is fighting with Corona Virus pandemic. Across the globe, unprecedented numbers of people got affected and many lost their lives. Unfortunately, at present, these numbers are again increasing in many countries including in India which are facing surge in corona cases again. In the past, to control the spread of corona virus, many countries imposed lockdowns and almost all countries imposed severe restrictions in movements which severely impacted markets at large and created crisis situation for majority of business sectors all over.

Business sectors have always had a critical role to play in any country's development and progress. In this testing times of Corona Virus pandemic and the resulting severe restrictions including limited period lockdowns, the contribution of business houses become more precious for global economy to bounce back stronger. However, businesses are facing crisis due to challenges on multiple fronts which include workforce exodus due to lockdown restrictions, shortage in supply of raw materials and in consumer demands, changing consumer behavior, financial crunches etc. In addition to these, there is widespread concern related to psychological effects of Corona Virus pandemic which may leave behind a trail of stressed and anxious workforce for corporate and businesses. International SOS – an international agency tracking and assessing security and travel risk for businesses, predicted that the mental health issues of employees will emerge as the fourth biggest threat to the business continuity due to Corona Virus pandemic (Rutam, 2020). This threat poses typical challenge which even goes beyond physical plane.

The holy book Ramayana and Lord Rama's life had been source of inspirations for innumerable great personalities and leaders throughout the history. In this unprecedented time of Corona Virus pandemic, when business crisis situations have shaken economy of majority of countries, lessons from Ramayan would certainly be of great importance. The Ramayana while depicting Lord Rama's life and struggles during various crisis situations carries many important management lessons. This paper highlights that lessons from Ramayana can be of great help to overcome present Business Crisis situations emerged due to corona virus global pandemic.

2. Corona Virus Pandemic and Similar References in Ramayana

Centuries ago, Goswami Tulsidas while writing the Supreme holy text Ramayana described about a few situations which when minutely reflect upon, draw many parallels with present corona virus pandemic. Specific verses of "Uttara Kanda" describe about causes and symptoms of such diseases which have wide-spreading potential with capability to engulf wider population across the globe leading to larger scale pain, sufferings and miseries for humanity. Though context of Ramayana are not limiting only on physical plane, but its descriptions of consequences on physical plane are drawing tremendous parallels with the consequences of corona virus presently being witnessed by the whole world. These series of verses of Ramayana also raise strong hope and give solution to completely eradicate such diseases. Simultaneously, it strongly establishes the fact that by Mercy of Lord Rama, it is possible to eradicate all such diseases for that, it suggests to keep faith on words of great spiritual masters and also of the experts in the field (in present pandemic case, doctors and scientists dedicatedly fighting against corona virus and working to minimize losses to the humanity) and to follow strict discipline (in case of corona virus, it would be to follow all protective norms). These verses are of wider importance to humanity at large and also for business community who are facing crisis on multiple fronts due to ongoing corona virus pandemic. Hence, the relevant portions of Ramayana are referred below and their meanings are interpreted, analyzed and parallels are drawn with different aspects associated with the ongoing corona virus pandemic:

सब कै निंदा जे जड़ करहीं। ते चमगादुर होइ अवतरहीं॥
सुनहु तात अब मानस रोगा। जिन्ह ते दुख पावहिं सब लोग॥14॥

This is part of description under “Uttara Kanda” of Ramayana in which, Garudaji asks seven questions and Kagbhusundiji gives answers. Among verses under Doha 120b, the meaning of the above Verse 14 is that those person who criticize all others, take next birth as Bats (Bats are mammals of the order of Chiroptera) from whom, all people gets pain and sufferings. If we draw parallel, some of the research investigations point towards Bats as the source of Corona Virus - spread of which has now taken form of global pandemic and has become the cause of pain and sufferings for the whole humanity for past more than one year.

मोह सकल ब्याधिन्ह कर मूला॥ तिन्ह ते पुनि उपजहिं बहु सूला॥
काम बात कफ लोभ अपारा॥ क्रोध पित्त नित छाती जारा॥15॥

In the Verse 15 quoted above, it is stated that ignorance (moha) is the cause of all diseases. From those diseases, further sufferings (sool) take birth. Kama is compared to Vata, increased Lobha is compared to Kapha and Krodha is compared to Pitta – the cause of troubles on the chest. From this description of Ramayana, analogy can easily be drawn as the chest trouble has been one of the dominant symptoms of corona virus attack.

प्रीति करहिं जौं तीनिउ भाई॥ उपजइ सन्यपात दुखदाई॥
बिषय मनोरथ दुर्गम नाना॥ ते सब सूल नाम को जाना॥16॥

In the Verse 16 above, it is further stated that if these three brothers (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) joins together, their affinity may give birth to the painful sanyapat disease. Every worldly pleasure earned with hardships can be understood as equal to sool or sufferings which are countless. Presently, Corona Virus is causing countless sufferings to the humanity which at large, was madly running after materialistic pleasures.

जुग बिधि ज्वर मत्सर अबिबेका॥ कहँ लगि कहौं कुरोग अनेका॥19॥

In the above verse 19 (under Doha 120b) it is stated that there are so many types of diseases that they cannot be described.

एक ब्याधि बस नर मरहिं ए असाधि बहु ब्याधि॥
पीड़हिं संतत जीव कहँ सो किमि लहै समाधि॥121 का॥

Further in Doha 121a, it is stated that due to only one such disease, people die then, what to say about other diseases which are unconquerable. Since these would become cause of continuous pain and sufferings, than in such condition, how one would be able to achieve state of Peace? At present, counties across the globe are witnessing fresh surge in corona cases due to new strains of mutated corona virus and its variants. The number of variants is increasing day-by-day to the extent that now, questions are getting raised regarding effectiveness of presently available vaccines against new mutated corona virus variants.

नेम धर्म आचार तप ग्यान जग्य जप दाना॥
भेषज पुनि कोटिन्ह नहिं रोग जाहिं हरिजाना॥121 खा॥

In the above Doha 121b, Kagbhusundiji states to Garudaji that although there are innumerable ways to deal with and medicines available but they do not work on such diseases. This statement also fits for analogy with corona virus, against which across the globe, many medicinal paths and scientific methods are attempted to eradicate but till date, there is no sign of success in that direction.

एहि बिधि सकल जीव जग रोगी॥ सोक हरष भय प्रीति बियोगी॥
मानस रोग कछुक मैं गाए॥ हहिं सब केँ लखि बिरलेन्ह पाए॥1॥

The above Verse 1 under Doha 121b states that in this world, though every single living entity is diseased but hardly a few get aware about this fact. At present, Corona virus has brought this fact to the fore and it has forced awareness to adopt healthy life-style and to desist from mad-rush of acquiring more and more worldly pleasures.

जाने ते छीजहिं कछु पापी॥ नास न पावहिं जन परितापी॥
बिषय कुपथ्य पाइ अंकुरे॥ मुनिहु हृदयँ का नर बापुरो॥2॥

The Verse 2 above states that these diseases though can spoil some specific segments but they cannot bring complete destructions. They can even harm healthy people who avoid following required precautions. When analogy is drawn with reference to presently ongoing corona virus pandemic, this verse in very clear terms raise hopes and indicates towards preventive solutions in the following manner:

- (i) The presently ongoing pandemic though is creating troubles for whole humanity, and even deaths are getting reported, but one should be very clear that corona virus cannot bring complete destructions. This is a great message of hope; also for business sectors - feeling pinch of losses and pessimism.
- (ii) Second line clearly states that despite one maintaining the best of health and hygiene, he may also get affected by corona virus if he do not follow corona related universal precautions which include wearing masks, maintaining safe distancing and keeping personal hygiene including use of hand sanitizers and soaps whenever required.

राम कृपाँ नासहिं सब रोगा॥ जौं एहि भाँति बनै संजोगा॥
सदगुर बैद बचन बिस्वासा॥ संजम यह न बिषय कै आसा॥३॥

The above Verse 3 further gives clear-cut affirming solution. It states that with Mercy of Lord Rama, it is possible to completely eradicate all diseases. But for that one should have complete faith on words (directions) of spiritual masters and at physical level, on sincere dedicated doctors and scientists. The verse further suggests to lead a restricted life as far as seeking sensory pleasures are concerned and also to follow strict Disciplines including proper lifestyle, diet and personal hygiene required to keep corona at bay.

3. Lessons for Business Sectors from Hanuman's ways of Overcoming Obstacles

In Ramayana, there are many instances involving Hanuman which open up many opportunities for our business community to gain insights into effective ways to overcome any business crisis situations - like the one created by corona virus pandemic, and to overcome obstacles in the path. In Ramayana, there is an episode which describes that Hanuman and his friends were sent by their King Sugreeva (who was an ally of Lord Rama), to search for Sita. Hanuman took a look at the infinite sea stretched in front of him. The sea is described as shimmering like molten turquoise metal, unknown to mankind. He took a deep breath and announced to his other teammates (with whom he had been embarked on search for Sita) that he is off to Lanka. Ramayana further describes that with roar that shook the earth and momentum that rivaled a comet, Hanuman leaped forward to cross the ocean. This incident demonstrates the business lesson that irrespective of how challenging a crisis situation is or how much uncertainty are involved in that, based on one's own strengths and after quickly assessing the changing market conditions, one needs to take leap and step forward with full momentum towards one's own business targets.

Further as described in the Ramayana, on his flight to Lanka, Hanuman encountered three major obstacles. Hanuman's ways of overcoming obstacles and lessons from them are analyzed and reflected below:

- (1) The first obstacle was Minaka – The Mountain: Minaka was a friend of Hanuman's spiritual father Vayu dev. It was sent by Sea god to assist Hanuman in his noble mission and hence, it rose from the depths of the sea and blocked Hanuman's way. Minaka requested Hanuman to rest for some time before proceeding further. Hanuman told Minaka that he is on a mission and had limited time. If he rests for a while, his plan will suffer so for showing his gratitude, he touched the mountain and moved forward in his quest.

The way of handling the first obstacle by Hanuman teaches the business lesson that when one is on a mission to achieve some target or to win over any challenging crisis situation like at present being thrown by corona virus, one should not deviate from his / her focus on mission and keeps moving towards the intended target without wasting any time.

- (2) Second obstacle was in the form of Sursa: This obstacle was thrown on the way of Hanuman by the devas who wanted to test resolve of Hanuman who was on a noble mission. Devas requested Sursa, the mother of serpents who inhabits the depth of the sea to confront him. Sursa appeared before Hanuman and said that she has a boon from the creator that anything that flies across the sea should pass through her mouth so it can become her food. She asked Hanuman to pass through her mouth as it is an order from the Gods. Hanuman explained Sursa about his mission and asked her to wait till its completion. He promised Sursa that he will voluntarily come back to become her food once he succeeds in finding Sita. Sursa didn't heed those words and insisted Hanuman to enter her mouth. So Hanuman asked Sursa to open her mouth wide enough to accommodate him and simultaneously, Hanuman started growing his size to become a giant. Sursa was a giant snake so she had no problem in opening her mouth to gargantuan proportions. Observing so, in a flash, Hanuman became thumb sized, entered her mouth and flew out of it before Sursa could realize anything. For a person like Hanuman with tremendous powers, it was not a tough task. Impressed Sursa gave her blessings to Hanuman and let him move forward.

This episode of Sursa and Hanuman teaches management lesson that how in any business crisis scenario a capable leader should act. It is particular relevant when business sectors across the globe are facing crisis on multiple fronts and despite several ongoing attempts to contain; at present corona virus is showing growth in its harming potential.

For a business with a mission, this is just an obstacle and strategy of Hanuman should be adopted to win-over the crisis situation being created at present by corona virus, worldwide.

- (3) The third obstacle was in the form of rakshasi Simhika: This was the third and final obstacle faced by Hanuman, right at the time when he was very close to his destination. Recognizing the real threat, Hanuman acted very swiftly. He again became small in size, entered in the mouth of Simhika, destroyed vital organs inside and emerged out of her ear by puncturing her ear drums.

Thus, this is another great lesson to handle any business crisis. In case one finds that real threat in directly in front, without hesitation and with proper strategy, one must take head-on without wasting time and move ahead by destroying the obstacles to the extent required, to move ahead in the path of business mission.

Thus, Hanuman, on the way to Lanka faced all three obstacles with optimum use of his strengths, with full utilization of his sharp intellect vis-à-vis demonstrating his courage and timely decision-making skills to overcome each of them.

4. Business Lessons from Life's of Lord Rama and His Ways of Handling Various Crisis

In Ramayana, Lord Rama despite being the elder son of Raja Dashratha and despite having well-proven best of the capabilities in all associated skills and thus, the mighty claimant of the throne of Ayodhya, kept facing multiple challenges, obstacles and crisis situations throughout his life. The Lord Rama's life and his ways of handling challenges and crisis gives many lessons for overcoming obstacles in individual's life as well as for business leaders to overcome any business crisis situation. A few of such important lessons are illustrated below:

- (1) Victory of good over evil is certain: Ramayana is popularly known as a text of "victory of good over evil" and popular festival "Dussehra" is celebrated to commemorate the same spirit. Ramayana shows that Ravana despite having best of the capabilities – strength, knowledge, valor and moreover, Lord Shiva's blessings, had to die because of his ill intentions.
Ramayana gives clear-cut message that despite severe hardships presently being faced by business communities across the globe - due to corona virus pandemic related restrictions, the certainty of victory of good over evil should always be kept in mind. This Ramayana's prominent message has potential to create immense positivity for any business to overcome any kind of crisis scenarios including due to corona.
- (2) Importance of Value relationship: Whether it is Rama discharging duties as son, brother, husband and as a king or Laxman living in exile to support his brother, or Bharat turning down the throne in favor of his elder brother Rama, they all demonstrates importance of value relationships. This well demonstrated lesson will be of great help to build a strong business organization capable of taking up any of the challenges and to win over any business crisis scenario.
- (3) Practice of Love and Kindness while dealing with any adversities: Lord Rama in Ramayana can be seen as epitome of Love and Kindness. Even in the most challenging times, he was always calm and compassionate and smile on his face was never affected. Ramayana teaches us that secret to lead a happy and peaceful life is love and kindness and the same principle if applied in business, will certainly helps to make business crisis-resilient.
- (4) Importance of Wisdom: Lord Rama despite being compassionate in all situations demonstrated importance of wisdom in every facets of life. Wisdom is equivalent to leadership competence which includes a deep understanding of what motivates people and how to deliver on agreed priorities (Hougaard, Carter & Hobson 2020). Lord Rama can be seen demonstrating these leadership competences throughout the Ramayana. Business leaders need to give due emphasis on importance of wisdom along with compassion.
- (5) Unity in Diversity: Ramayana gives the very important message of Unity in Diversity. In Ramayana, one may find that people from all walks of life including animals (bear and monkeys) were in Lord Rama's army which supported him, when he headed towards Lanka. It may be noted that it is this very unity that helped him accomplish the mission successfully. A Deloitte University study shows 80% improvement in business performance when levels of diversity and inclusions were high (Smith, 2015). Thus, this principle of Unity in Diversity will make business stronger and helps it to sail through any challenging times successfully.
- (6) Importance of good company: Ramayana teaches us the importance of good company. How mere a bad association may cause massive damage, has been demonstrated in the episode of Kaikayi and Manthara. In fact, Kaikayi used to love Rama more than his own son Bharat but due to influence of bad association of Manthara, her intellect gets poisoned and she decides 14 years exile for Lord Rama. Another holy text Srimad Bhagavatam in its Canto 3, Chapter 25, Verse 25 very clearly brings forth the importance of good association for growth and progress (Prabhupada, 2008). For business to stand stronger during crisis, it is important that intentions of its leaders and employees should be in line with visions and missions of the business and each of them, be ready to provide good company and support system for co-colleagues.
- (7) Do not reveal your secrets / weaknesses: Ramayana gives a very important message for today's business world that one should not reveal his business secrets or weaknesses to not only enemy but also to friends because in this opportunist world, it will never take much time for your best of the friend / supporter to turn to opposite end. Ramayana gives biggest example of Ravana revealing secret of his death to his brother Vibhishan who later opted to ally with Lord Rama in fight against Ravana. Rama was finding difficult in killing Ravana but when secret of his death was revealed by Vibhishan, it became easy for Rama to kill Ravana and win the battle.

- (8) Never underestimate a person: Ramayana teaches another big lesson that one should never underestimate a person by his appearance. In Ramayana, there are many instances when Hanuman was underestimated by many but he was always in forefront in the battle against Ravana. Be it bringing of mountain for Sanjeevani booti or let it be setting Lanka on fire, Hanuman's strength was unmatched. This gives very important lesson for business houses for not judging any person by appearance & to avert related blunders.
- (9) Faith is Powerful: At many instance, Ramayana demonstrates the Power of Faith. Faith of Hanuman on his Master Lord Rama was unprecedented throughout. Utilization of power of name "Rama" to make stones afloat, while making the bridge to cross the ocean on the way to Lanka, demonstrated Power of Faith in Lord Rama's name. In another episode, Mata Sabri demonstrates that because of her undeterred faith and devotion, even God Lord Rama has to give Darshan by visiting her hut. About faith, Lord Krsna says to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 17 Text 3 that the faith of all humans conforms to their mind. Lord Krsna further clarifies that all people possess Faith and whatever the nature of their Faith, that is verily what they are (Prabhupada, 1986). There are innumerable instances in the history where the Power of Faith has been demonstrated in performing big activities and in achieving great performances. During presently ongoing corona virus pandemic, business crisis can surely be either averted or effectively handled on the strength of the Power of Faith.

5. Conclusions

The Ramayana while depicting Lord Rama's life and struggles during various crisis situations carries many important management lessons. As far as presently ongoing corona virus pandemic is concerned, specific verses of Ramayana's Uttara Kanda descriptions of causes and symptoms of diseases draws many parallels with corona virus which had already engulfed wider population across the globe, causing large scale pain, sufferings and miseries for humanity. These series of Ramayana verses further gives strong hope and establishes the fact that by Mercy of Lord Rama, it is possible to eradicate all such diseases. For achieving that, it suggests to keep faith on words of great spiritual masters and also of the experts of the field (they are doctors and scientists dedicatedly fighting against corona virus and to minimize losses) and to follow strict discipline (in case of Corona Virus, it is to follow all protective norms). In Ramayana, there are many instances involving Hanuman which opens up many opportunities for our business community to gain insights into ways and means to overcome any business crisis situations like the one created by corona virus pandemic and to overcome obstacles in the path. In Ramayana, Lord Rama despite being the elder son of Raja Dashratha and despite having well-proven best of the capabilities in all associated skills and thus, the mighty claimant of the throne of Ayodhya, kept facing multiple challenges, obstacles and crisis situations throughout his life. The Lord Rama's life and his ways of handling challenges and crisis give many lessons for business leaders which may be of help in effective handling of any kind of business crisis. In the corona pandemic related business crisis situation, which has presently shaken economy of majority of countries, lessons from Ramayan would certainly be of great importance.

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