Demonstration of Strategic Leadership qualities by Lord SriRama – A McKinsey perspective

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Abstract

A journey without a vision is like a ship without a rudder. In this competitive world, if anyone wants to achieve target, they should have a strategy along with leadership qualities. This is not today’s words. This has been practiced by kings in olden days and Gods from Indian Mythology. One of the most ancient epics of India, Ramayana has lots of examples of Strategies and a protagonist who has demonstrated the leadership qualities in achieving his mission. Lord SriRama, has shown path to many emerging leaders to practice the qualities so that they can achieve their targets. Lord SriRama is not only a role model as an idol person but also he is role model as a Strategic leader to many of the successful kings and leaders. He is a good learner than a preacher. Many of the successful leaders have taken his life story as life path and become successful as well as they themselves become role models for many of the people. Man of the millennium, Father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi is one of the followers of Lord SriRama. The present paper deals with some of the strategic leadership qualities of Lord SriRama.

Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.

-Sun Tzu

Weak leadership can wreck the soundest strategy; forceful execution of even a poor plan can often bring victory.

-Sun Zi

A Strategy is a set of complex actions and decisions that result in formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve specific targets.

Every organization involves in a complicated pattern of decisions ranging from determination of broad objectives of the organization to decisions regarding its day-to-day
processes. Some of the decisions can be reached in short term and some can be achieved in long term. For all the objectives and decisions, the organization needs good leaders. The strategic management is not a new term, it has been practiced by many leaders of Indian epics, and of the most admirable leaders is Lord SriRama of Ramayana. He has fought with King Ravana who has huge well trained army with a rag tag army and won against him. The leadership qualities of Lord SriRama are presented below.

Strategic Leadership qualities of Lord SriRama

There are many qualities which have been demonstrated by great leaders. The below are the qualities which Lord SriRama has shown in Ramayana.

- **Planning** – Proper planning is necessary if anyone want to achieve target. Lord SriRama has demonstrated this in Ramayana in several instances. Right from the beginning of searching of Sita, he has got a perfect Vision and a Plan of rescuing Sita and killing evil. He has executed the plan in a systematic manner like building the Ramasethu, negotiating with Ravana and succeeding in the war.

- **Organizing** – After preparing the Vision and plan, the Mission has to be executed in an organized manner. Mission deals with the pathway or the Road to achieve the vision, in that process, objectives have to be framed and executed. To achieve the objectives, there should be a proper structure and everyone should be clear of their roles and responsibilities. There should not be any chaos in defining the roles and responsibilities. Lord SriRama has clearly mentioned the hierarchy as well as the roles and responsibilities of his team.

- **Staffing** – Lord SriRama is good at identifying the inherent talents of his teammates. After identifying the talents, he has allocated different sorts of works to the vanaras according to their ability. Appointing a wrong person in a good position will cause damage and also appointing a right person in a wrong position also causes same sort of damage to the kingdom or organization. Rama has shared the same concept with Bharata also.

- **Directing** – In the execution phase, proper direction will lead to achievement of the strategies in a smooth manner. The subordinates might have skills but all of them might not be able to execute their skills to the fullest as per expectations. In such scenario, the
leader should direct the teammates towards the objective. Lord SriRama directed Bharata as how to be a great king and guided in all the aspects of principles which a great king has to follow. SriRama has guided Bharata in terms of tax aspects, treatment of soldiers, payment of wages and trade and commerce aspects etc.

- **Leading** - At the time of building Ramasethu, initially the Samudra (Sea god) did not co-operate with vanaras, at that time Lord SriRama, takes the responsibility and warns Samudra and makes him to calm so that they can build the bridge. A successful leader will be always within the team and guides the subordinates at the time of need. He has also taken part in building the Ramasethu, and never relaxed. A leader is one who will be with his team while the team is working.

- **Controlling** – If anything is getting deviated in the plan, a Leader has to control that so that the target can be achieved. When Sugreeva forgot about the promise he has made to Lord SriRama of searching Sita, he has sent Lord Lakshmana to remind about the promise. He has shown controlling techniques otherwise, Sugreeva would not pay attention after getting his kingdom.

- **Being patient** – A leader should have patience while aheading towards the targets and Lord SriRama has shown great level of patience when he lost Lord Sita, he waited about a year and half to get back his lost wife and he has not lost hope in that period. He waited a long time spending in Vanavasa, eating fruits and vegetables and slept on floor though he is a King.

- **Team Building** – Lord SriRama is considered as one of the best examples for building up of team. He has built teams with Vanaras along with Sugreeva as king. He also made a small squirrel as his team member and not neglected that. With his leadership qualities he has made one of the opponent team members (Vibishan) as his team member. SriRama convinced his teammates also while Vibhishan was not initially not accepted by his Vanaras.

- **Fair Treatment** – Lord SriRama treats everyone equally with courtesy and respect, he mingles with all the people regardless of social status though he is a prince. He always moved with each and every person in the Vanara team. He used to call every Vanara by name.
• **Resource Utilization** – A Good leader will utilize resources in an optimum manner, which has been exactly demonstrated by Lord SriRama, he has used all the natural resources (Rocks and Sand) at the time of building *Ramasethu* (Rock-bridge) to Lanka. He did not waited for the resources from outside or from anyone, he made use of natural resources for building the best bridge that too floating on water. He has identified a different variety of stone which has ability to float lightly on water.

• **Adaptability to the environment** – The Leader should alter the strategy according to the environment. Lord SriRama has altered some strategy while killing Vali, it is not the violation of principle in war. He has killed Vali standing beside a tree, as Vali has a boon of getting the strength of opponent person in the war. So, Lord SriRama has altered strategy to kill an ill-minded person.

• **Belief in the ability of subordinates** – Leader should have confidence and belief on the subordinates’ abilities. Lord SriRama has demonstrated this in a perfect manner. Though the army lead by him is a rag-tag one and the opponent army is well trained/well equipped, Lord SriRama never had any doubt on the abilities of his team, that confidence has given lots of boost up to his team which has given them the victory.

• **Safeguarding subordinates** – Lord SriRama leaves royal palace and goes to forest to safeguard the Rushis who are performing some rituals in the forests. Those Rushis were interrupted by two demons Maricha and Subahu, Lord SriRama goes to forests with the request of Viswamitra and kills the two Maricha and Subahu, in this way he safeguards the people in his kingdom.

• **Commitment towards taken decision** – Leader has to stick on to the decisions he has taken. Lord SriRama went to forest because of wish of his step mother Kaika and his father Dasaratha. Bharata, the son of Kaika went to forest and requests Lord SriRama to come back to royal palace, but SriRama rejects the offer stating that he has to complete his father’s wish and he will be committed to the decision.

• **Prowess of helping the other even in adversity** – Leader will strive to help the needy, even though he/she is in adverse conditions. Lord SriRama was in grief of losing his wife Sita, but at that time, he meets Sugreeva, who also losses his wife due to his brothers deception, and promises to help Sugreeva to get back his wife.
• **Not losing hope** – Hope is the key to success. The Leader should not lose hope, whoever may the opponent, and he/she has to deliver what was expected from him/her. Lord SriRama never lost hope on the battle though he knew that he is going to do war against Ravana who has very good army, more strengths in many aspects. Because of that hope, he has achieved the victory in the battle.

• **Accepting elder’s words** – Leader has to accept the elders/superiors words and act according to the environment. When a female demon, Tataki attacks Lord SriRama and group, SriRama is reluctant to war against Tataki, as it is a female demon. But Viswamitra orders Lord SriRama to attack Tataki, though it is a female, it is causing harm to the mankind. Hence SriRama kills the demon.

• **Negotiating skills** – Lord SriRama is considered as the best in terms of negotiating skills. He has shown his negotiating skills in different situations such as when Vibhishan was defected by many of vanaras, he has convinced the vanaras to accept Vibhishan as their team mate. When Lord SriRama killed Vali and made Sugreeva as king of vanaras, he has given a very position to Angadha, son of vali and convinced all the parties.

• **Following code of Ethics** – Lord SriRama never deviated from the code of Ethics, even though his wife has been abducted by Ravana, SriRama sent a message to Ravana with Angadha simply asking to return his wife. He wanted to declare the war against Ravana once after the offer was rejected by Ravana. Even in the war, as he has defeated Ravana in the first day, he has given option to rethink to return Sita and then only he has killed Ravana on the last day of the battle.

• **Standing courageously in adversity** – Lord SriRama has one of the greatest qualities of leaders as he stood courageously in the adverse conditions and was very cool at crisis. When Sita was kidnapped by Ravana, Lord SriRama was bold and he started mission to rescue Sita with great courage.

• **Listening and Learning** – A good leader should listen to all and learn from the circumstances. Lord SriRama, will listen to the words of Ravana, when he was lying wounded and about to die. Listening the good from opponent is not a simple task, but Lord SriRama has done that and practiced some principles in his kingdom also.

• **Empowering subordinates** – Lord SriRama has given importance to all his teammates and taken decisions after discussing with them only. He has considered opinions of all
vanaras at the time of making Vibhishan as one of his teammates. Once after clarifying the teammates only, Lord SriRama made Vibhishan as their teammate.

- **Courage of Charity** – Lord SriRama promised Vibhishan to make king as Lanka when he came to the team of SriRama. But the teammates rose a doubt that if Ravana gives Sita, who will be king of Lanka and how SriRama can withstand on his words. For that, Lord SriRama told, “if Ravana comes and releases Sita and asks for mercy, I will make him the king of Ayodhya”. This shows the leader should have courage to give charity.

### A comparison between Lord SriRama and King Ravana

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<th>Rama</th>
<th>Ravana</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rag-tag army</td>
<td>Well trained and sophisticated Army</td>
<td>Fully equipped Weapons</td>
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<td>No proper weapons</td>
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<td>Less in number</td>
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<td>Army does not have prior experiences in systematic wars</td>
<td>Army defeated well established armies and kingdoms</td>
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<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Over confidence</td>
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<td>Will listen to the subordinates</td>
<td>Will not listen to the subordinates</td>
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<td>Gives preference to Dharma</td>
<td>Gives preference to Ego</td>
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<td>Participative decision making</td>
<td>Autocratic decision making</td>
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### Mc-Kinsey’s 7s framework in Rama’s Strategies

**Strategy:** Lord SriRama has a clear vision of rescuing Sita and killing the evil. His mission statements include trace out Sita, sending a warning message to Ravana, if he denies, attacking the Lanka and getting back Sita. He has a clear strategy of reaching Lanka, by building a rock-bridge and planning war. He has defined the strategy clearly and communicated the same to the rag-tag army of vanaras. He has succeeded in making clear his vision and strategy to the vanaras. If any leader makes his team clear about the vision and mission statements, obviously they will succeed in the targets.
**Structure:** The Structure is the basic set-up or institutional framework which is designed to achieve the strategy. The structure or hierarchy of Rama is a 3 layered one. In the top level, Rama and Lakshmana will be there to make strategies, in the second level Sugreeva, Hanuma and Jambavan to give directions to the team and in the bottom level Angada, Nala etc will be there to implement the strategy.

**Staff:** Staff is the Human Resources existing in the organization. Rama has different people in his team (staff), he has segregated different sorts of works to different people. Planning starts with perfect staff only. He has given searching work to Hanuma, negotiation work to Angadha, in-charge of army work to Jambavan. Lord SriRama believes that a right person should be given the right job, then only the kingdom can flourish for a long time.

**Skills:** Skills refer to the organizational and individual capabilities. Rama at the time of staffing initially identified the skill set of each and every *vanara* and then allocated the work so that they will be exactly fit into the role. Identification of skills is considered as one of the best leadership qualities/strategist qualities, and then only strategy can be framed and executed in a perfect manner. The right person to the Right job will definitely yield satisfaction to the person and also the success to the team and the organization.

**System:** The leadership tools for planning, decision making, communication and control is referred to as Systems in the organization. We tell that a Blue Ocean Strategy is a aligning the
system of activities in pursuit of differentiation or low cost, Lord SriRama has implemented the same by building a Rock-Bridge, which is an innovative one and at very low cost and time. Utilization of natural resources as well as the resources available will obviously result in profit enhancement as we will not be paying cost or spending additional cost.

Style: The style is referred to as how the leaders behave with the team while they are in a mission. The leadership style Lord Sri Rama followed is participative leadership. He has given equal importance for all his subordinates. Because of his leadership style even the squirrel has become his part of his team at the time of building Ramsethu. Fair treatment, allotment of work, being impartial, and always being in the team are certain examples of the styles which Lord SriRama has followed.

Shared Values: Lord SriRama shared all his views freely with his teammates and received the opinions of all subordinates. He has followed a two way communication while taking all the important decisions. He has never encouraged only “Yes men” category of people. When Bharata came to forest, Lord SriRama has posed 400 questions and asked about the well being of the people in the kingdom. Also, he has given principles of political science to Bharata how to be a great king. He has shared his intellect with Bharata and wanted to be one of the great kings.

Conclusion

Lord SriRama is not only an ideal person, but also an ideal leader. He has demonstrated today’s so called leadership principles/managerial principles before centuries itself. He practiced many principles but never preached those. He went to forest by his words, and killed demons, and by his mother’s words again he went to forest respected parents, and elders and also he demonstrated the path to fulfill parents and elders wishes. He could have simply told that the boons were given by his father and he cannot take that responsibility of fulfilling his father’s boon. But he has not done that, he has obliged that and stood as an example for taking responsibility and giving respect to elders even in the adverse conditions. This is what we need to learn from him, even in the adverse conditions, he has not changed his Vision, Mission, and goals. He is the best son, the best king, the best husband, the best brother, the best father, the best soldier, the best general, the best planner and the best leader. Our present leaders have
followed his life story and become role models for us. The main principle we have to learn from Lord SriRama is not deviating from the path however it may be the condition and position. As the world is uncertain, a perfect leader should be prepared for the worst, then only they can get the best. This is the strategic leadership skill demonstrated by Lord SriRama.

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