

Reading C. Rajagopalachari's Ramayana Through the Lens of Dharma

Ankita Parihar

Amity School of Languages Amity University, Lucknow, India

Abstract: The Ramayana, a Hindu epic by C. Rajagopalachari, is the subject of this research paper, which looks at the idea of dharma in it. The moral and ethical code of behaviour, or dharma, is a central element in the narrative and affects the characters' decisions and deeds. The paper delves into the various facets of dharma as they are presented in the Ramayana, examining their importance and bearing on the plot. The introduction of the research paper provides a summary of the Ramayana and its cultural importance. The concept of dharma is then thoroughly examined. The paper also examines the moral choices that the characters make in accordance with their dharma and the ethical conundrums they encounter. The research for this paper aims to add to the body of knowledge already available on the Ramayana and deepen our understanding of dharma, which serves as the cornerstone of Hindu ethics and morality

INTRODUCTION

Rajaji, also known as C. Rajagopalachari, was a statesman, a lawyer, writer, and politician from India. After India's independence, he served as the country's first Indian governor general. He was also a key figure in the Indian National Congress. Rajaji was a prolific writer and translator in addition to his political career.

His retelling of the Hindu epic Ramayana is one of his best-known literary works. The 1957 publication of Rajaji's Ramayana, a condensed and simplified version of the original Valmiki Ramayana, was done in an effort to make the ancient epic more widely available. Rajaji's interpretation aimed to present the enduring tale of Rama and his exploits in a language and manner that readers of all ages.

Rajaji's Ramayana, which adheres to the conventional format of the epic, tells the tale of Rama, Lord Vishnu's seventh avatar. To save his wife Sita from the control of the evil king Ravana, Rama is on a rescue expedition. The Ramayana's core moral

and ethical lessons—righteousness, obligation, loyalty, and the triumph of good over evil—are the subject of this paper. The tale begins with Rama's birth and upbringing, his marriage to Sita, and their exile to the jungle as a result of Rama's stepmother Kaikeyi's scheme. Lakshmana, Rama's devoted brother, accompanies Rama and Sita in exile. During their time in the forest, the three face a variety of difficulties and encounter mythological beings, sages, and demons. The story's turning point occurs when Ravana kidnaps Sita and takes her to his kingdom, Lanka. Sugriva, the monkey king, and his army of monkeys, including the great Hanuman, are summoned by Rama and Lakshmana. With the support of the monkey army, Rama fights a massive battle against Ravana and his demon soldiers. Ultimately, Rama emerges victorious and rescues Sita from captivity. After their triumphant return to Ayodhya, Rama is crowned as the rightful king, bringing peace and prosperity to the kingdom. The story concludes with Rama's reign as a just and benevolent king, loved and revered by his subjects.

The importance of Rajaji's Ramayana might be attributed to its readability and accessibility. Rajaji's style is clear, compelling, and devoid of the challenging Sanskrit lines found in the original book. By narrating the story in a more straightforward manner, Rajaji made the epic accessible to a wider audience, including kids and those who were not familiar with classical Indian literature. The moral dilemmas that the characters encounter and the lessons that can be drawn from them are emphasised in Rajaji's Ramayana, which also emphasises the value of morality and dharma (righteousness). One of its objectives is to encourage readers to uphold moral principles and ideals in their own life.

THE CONCEPT OF DHARMA

The idea of dharma is complex and multifaceted, with a wide range of potential applications. Many perspectives, including philosophical, moral, social, and cosmological ones, can be used to understand it. Here is a detailed analysis of the concept and importance of dharma:

- Etymology: The word "dharma" comes from the Sanskrit root "dhr," which means to uphold or support. Dharma, which is commonly mistaken for "duty," "righteousness," or "law," actually refers to the natural order of things and the underlying principles that underpin it.
- Dharma is really about the innate balance and order in the cosmos. It acknowledges that everything has a proper place and function within this cosmic order and that there is a basic pattern and balance to existence.
- Dharma offers a framework for moral and ethical behaviour. Moral and ethical principles. It includes a set of ideals and principles that direct people in making decisions and leading moral lives. Honesty, truthfulness, compassion, nonviolence, integrity, and respect for others are some examples of these values.
- Dharma asserts that each person has unique roles, responsibilities, and duties that are determined by their societal standing, personal connections, and stage of life. It emphasises how crucial it is to carry out these responsibilities with honesty, zeal, and integrity. Individuals contribute to the welfare of society and the upkeep of social order by performing their tasks.
- Dharma encompasses the harmony and wellbeing of the entire universe, going beyond the deeds of a single person. It emphasises the necessity of living in harmony with the environment and all other living things while acknowledging the interconnection of all beings. Dharmic behaviour encourages societal peace, justice, and the general benefit of all.
- Dharma and the idea of karma, or the law of cause and consequence, are intimately related. This idea holds that the results of our deeds, thoughts, and intentions affect our present and future experiences. People develop positive karma through living in accordance with dharma, which

results in both personal development and spiritual evolution.

- Dharma includes striving for spiritual enlightenment and self-realization. It acknowledges that overcoming ego, ignorance, and worldly attachments in order to get a better awareness of one's actual nature is the ultimate goal of human life. The dharma path entails self-control, self-examination, and practices including introspection, meditation, and selfless service.
- Dharma does not impose rigid rules or dogmas, but rather promotes contextual interpretation and flexibility. It acknowledges that dharma may change based on variables including time, place, culture, and unique circumstances. While some fundamental truths are permanent, the precise way that dharma is applied can vary depending on the situation.
- Dharma also directs people towards the road of liberation and transcendence. It acknowledges that achieving spiritual freedom (moksha), also known as nirvana, or nirvana, is the ultimate goal of existence. People can transcend the constraints of earthly existence and unite with higher consciousness by living in accordance with dharma.

In conclusion, the concept of dharma includes the moral and ethical standards that govern people, societies, and the cosmos as a whole. It places a strong emphasis on upholding obligations, seeking justice, and striking a healthy balance between societal and personal responsibilities. Dharma is a framework for living a moral and purposeful life that fosters both personal and societal wellbeing.

The idea of dharma has been examined and discussed by a number of well-known philosophers. Here are a few noteworthy instances:

Mahatma Gandhi: Gandhi, a significant participant in the struggle for Indian independence, emphasised the moral and ethical aspects of dharma. He upheld the tenet of non-violence (ahimsa), and he saw dharma as a motivating factor for moral behaviour and societal change.

According to Swami Vivekananda, a well-known spiritual figure dharma is the expression of a person's actual nature and inner potential. He emphasised the

quest for self-realization and the interconnectedness of all worldviews and living things.

Gautama Buddha: The Buddha introduced the idea of dharma to Buddhism. In his view, the Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths are the keys to enlightenment, and dharma is the way to freedom from suffering.

Chanakya: Chanakya was an ancient Indian philosopher and strategist who published a large body of work on leadership and statecraft. He stressed the significance of justice, righteousness, and the welfare of the populace, viewing dharma as the moral and ethical underpinning for good governance.

These philosophers and thinkers have explored the ethical, spiritual, social, and governmental facets of dharma from a variety of angles. Their interpretations have helped different philosophical and religious traditions understand and interpret dharma.

Dharma in Ramayana: The idea of dharma is central to the Hindu epic Ramayana. Through the characters' decisions and actions, Dharma is explored, emphasizing how crucial it is to live morally and according to one's obligations. The protagonists of the epic, including as Lord Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman, are shown to defend dharma in their choices and acts.

Rama's Dharma: In Ramayana Lord Rama is depicted as a devoted son, loving brother, caring husband, and a great ruler. He never lied and carried out his responsibilities with zeal and honesty. His primary goal is to walk the road of righteousness and never disrespect his father's wishes. When Dasharatha, the king of Ayodhya, ordered him to go into exile, he wanted to fulfil his father's wish and obeyed him with great reverence. On the other hand, Lord Dasharatha wanted Ram to be king of Ayodhya the next day, but he didn't break the promise of Kaikeyi and was forced to send Rama into exile. This was the greatness of Lord Rama that he did not speak against his stepmother and went away to exile for fourteen years silently, which is why he is known as 'Maryada Purushottam'.

Rama's marriage to Sita allows him to live out his dharma as a husband. He is completely committed to ensuring and caring for his wife's safety and well-being. When Ravana abducts Sita, Rama embarks on a perilous journey to save her, inspired by his love and

duty as a husband. Lord Rama's entire life is an example of ideal living and teaches us how to restore Dharma on Earth. Rama is also an outstanding warrior who must use his fighting skills to protect the righteous and defeat bad forces. He participates in battles with demons and commands armies to restore justice and order to the world. Rama also fulfils his brother's Dharma. Rama's relationships with his brothers, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrughna, demonstrate his sense of brotherly duty and affection. He treats his brothers with respect and kindness, and his actions are guided by a deep bond of love and loyalty towards them.

Rama's character is a paradigm of righteousness and moral behaviour for society. He upholds dharma in thought, word, and action, setting an example for others to follow. Rama's devotion to his dharma inspires and directs not just the epic's characters, but also generations of readers and devotees.

R K Narayan, a prominent Indian English writer, also discusses Dharma in his work "Ramayana". In Hinduism, it is said, "Pran jaye par Vachan Na jaye". Many unpleasant events that Rama endured during his exile are explained by Narayan. Rama was never irritated and never showed any signs of rage on his face. He performed his Dharma obligations to the best of his ability.

Sita's Dharma: Sita is the legendary avatar of Lakshmi. In the Ramayana, Sita's dharma is defined by her virtues, roles, and responsibilities as a daughter, wife, and queen. Sita is required to honour and obey her father as King Janaka's daughter. She shows her devotion to her father by taking part in the Swayamvara (a rite in which the bride chooses her spouse) and accepts Rama's marriage proposal. Sita's primary dharma is her role as Rama's wife. Sita is always conscious of her obligations to her husband, Lord Rama. When Ravana tried to seduce Sita, she stayed chaste and patiently awaited her husband. When her spouse abandoned her during her pregnancy, on the other hand, she worked tirelessly to complete her chores. She is the embodiment of Dharma. When she learnt that Rama was leaving for exile, she set aside her regal pleasure and requested to follow him to his forest life. After Rama becomes the king of Ayodhya, Sita's dharma expands to her role as the queen. She is accountable for carrying out her responsibilities as queen, which include caring for the

welfare of the people, upholding royal traditions, and serving as a role model of morality and compassion.

Lakshmana's Dharma: Rama's loving brother, Lakshmana, symbolises the ideal of a dedicated disciple who selflessly serves his elder brother and upholds dharma under all circumstances. The major dharma of Lakshmana is to serve and protect his elder brother, Rama. He happily joins Rama in their exile in the wilderness and stays by his side throughout their trials. Lakshmana's strong love and unwavering loyalty to Rama demonstrate his dedication to his dharma as a brother and devoted disciple. Rama and Sita are ferociously protected by Lakshmana. Lakshmana's protective behaviour reflects his dharma as a brother and guardian. He acts as a shield for Rama and Sita, protecting them from different attacks and dangers. Lakshmana shows great respect and obedience towards Rama. He follows Rama's commands without question and carries out his duties with utmost dedication. Lakshmana's obedience and respect towards Rama demonstrate his understanding of his role and his commitment to upholding his dharma.

Hanuman's Dharma: Hanuman, the heroic monkey deity, is an important character in the Hindu epic Ramayana. Hanuman is known for his undying devotion, loyalty, and amazing power, and his deeds and character embody various parts of dharma. Hanuman's main dharma is his unwavering devotion to Lord Rama. He regards himself as a humble servant and devotee of Rama, dedicating his entire being to his service. Hanuman's love and devotion for Rama are unparalleled, and he goes to great lengths to fulfil his duties and assist Rama in his quest to rescue Sita. Hanuman shows immense loyalty and selfless service towards Lord Rama. He considers it his duty to protect and serve Rama in any way possible. Hanuman's willingness to take on difficult undertakings, like leaping across the ocean and entering Lanka to find Sita, serves as a testament to his loyalty. He selflessly puts Rama's needs and mission above his own. Hanuman's dharma extends beyond his devotion to Rama. He embodies universal love and compassion, showing kindness and assistance to all who seek his help. Hanuman's compassionate nature makes him beloved by people from all walks of life,

and he becomes a source of inspiration and guidance for devotees.

Bharata's Dharma: Bharata's dharma is shaped by his love for his brother and his commitment to upholding righteousness and justice. Despite being offered the kingdom of Ayodhya in Rama's absence, Bharata refuses to accept the throne. Instead, he seeks for Rama and begs him to come back and take up his rightful throne. Bharata's deep devotion to Rama and his selfless act of giving up the kingdom highlight his commitment to his family and his duty as a brother. Bharata stands as an epitome of righteousness and justice. He recognises the injustice done to Rama and takes action to reinstate dharma in Ayodhya, despite pressure from his mother and the chance to rule. Bharata's effort to bring the country back together under Rama's rule and his refusal to take the throne are evidence of his dedication to safeguarding dharma and ensuring justice prevails.

Ravana's Dharma: The Ramayana's portrayal of Ravana's dharma is frequently viewed as a bad example, deviating from moral behaviour. While Ravana is a complex character with his own beliefs and values, his actions and choices ultimately go against the principles of dharma. Ravana's primary focus is on accumulating power and fulfilling his ambitions. He desires to be the supreme ruler and seeks to expand his kingdom by any means necessary. However, he is oblivious to the moral and ethical ramifications of his conduct due to his tremendous ambition. He believes he is above the dharma's laws and sees himself as invincible. His arrogance leads him to disregard the consequences of his actions and causes him to underestimate his adversaries, such as Lord Rama. In Ravana's story, Sita, Lord Rama's wife, is the object of his intense yearning and lust. He decides to kidnap her against her agreement and in violation of the moral precepts of justice and respect for others since he is infatuated with her beauty.

Animals also have important parts in the Ramayana and demonstrate their own sense of dharma, which is in line with their innate inclinations and place in the universe. Animals don't have the same level of cognition or moral agency as humans, but in the framework of the epic, their acts and behaviours

nonetheless represent their underlying dharma. For instance, in the Ramayana, Jatayu has the dharma of a protector and a defender. When he encounters Ravana abducting Sita, Jatayu valiantly tries to rescue her, engaging in a fierce battle despite being overpowered. Jatayu's dharma compels him to act selflessly and fulfil his duty of protecting the innocent. His unwavering commitment to righteousness, even at the cost of his own life, showcases the depth of his dharma as a noble and brave guardian. Other such as the squirrel and the bear, also contribute in their own ways to the larger narrative. The squirrel exemplifies its dharma by making a tiny contribution of carrying pebbles to the construction of the bridge to Lanka. Jambavan, the bear, exemplifies his dharma by lending Lord Rama his strength and intelligence while he searches for Sita. Overall, dharma in the Ramayana represents a moral compass that guides individuals towards righteous living, social harmony, and spiritual growth. It is a guiding principle that serves as the foundation for the actions, choices, and virtues exhibited by the characters in the epic.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the idea of dharma plays a crucial role in C. Rajagopalachari's Ramayana. Rajagopalachari emphasises the significance of dharma as a guiding principle that influences the characters' actions and decisions through his retelling of the story. Dharma is presented as a moral compass that places a strong emphasis on doing one's duty, upholding moral principles, respect for authority, and maintaining social order.

The characters in Rajagopalachari's Ramayana exemplify the various facets of dharma through their actions and decisions. Lord Rama, as the epitome of righteousness, showcases unwavering commitment to dharma in every aspect of his life. His adherence to his responsibilities, respect for elders, and unwavering faith in the divine serve as guiding principles for others. Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, and other characters also embody dharma through their selfless acts, sacrifices, and commitment to moral values. Their unwavering devotion to Lord Rama and their adherence to dharma reflect the significance of faith and righteousness in navigating the challenges of life. Rajagopalachari's portrayal of dharma in the Ramayana underscores the timeless and universal nature of these moral principles.

Dharma is presented as a moral compass that helps individuals navigate dilemmas, make ethical choices, and contribute to the well-being of society. By emphasizing dharma as a guiding force, Rajagopalachari's Ramayana offers valuable insights into the importance of moral and ethical conduct, duty, sacrifice, and the preservation of social order. It invites readers to reflect on the timeless wisdom of dharma and its relevance in contemporary times, encouraging individuals to embody these principles in their own lives.

Overall, C. Rajagopalachari's Ramayana serves as a powerful testament to the enduring significance of dharma, reminding readers of the importance of righteousness, moral values, and the pursuit of the greater good in their own personal journeys.

REFERENCE

1. Narayan, R. K. *Ramayana: A short and modern prose version of the Indian Epic*, Penguin, 2006:
2. Rajagopalachari, C, *Ramayana*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 7 August 2013
3. Johari, Sanjay, *The Ramayana: An Epic of Indian Ideals and Dharma*, Vol. 01, Issue 11, February 2023. ISSN - 0974-536X
4. Ray, Kumkum. H. L. V. Derozio as The Romantic Revolutionary Poet. 1997. Purvanchal University Jaunpur, Ph. D Thesis.
5. Ray, Kumkum. *Shades of Resilience*. Kolkata: Exceller Books: A Global Press, 2022.
6. Ray, Kumkum. *Flow Free Breathe Free*. Chennai: Notion Press, 2018.