Reflections of Servant Leadership from Great Epics of India

Dr.G. Anupama and Dr. Padmavathi Agarwal

Abstract--- The Leadership styles as per the western researches are; Charismatic, Benevolent, Democratic, Transactional, Transformational, Participative, Free-reign, Laissez Faire, etc. The basic models are drawn from the corporate fields and set-ups where individuals come together, work and contribute to the accomplishment of common objectives. Many studies identified servant leadership style to be the more reliable and result oriented style in organizational arenas. But, the reflections of servant leadership are encrypted in the famous epics of India. The qualities of characters such as Krishna from Mahabharata, Rama from Ramayana, Bharatha from Ramayana, role of Pandavas in Mahabharata during their period of exile stand as examples of Servant Leadership style. The present study makes an attempt to find out whether these replications of servant leadership values drawn from the great epics are represented by Managers at workplaces. The results indicate that there are no significant reflections of great epics on the specific values drawn from them by the Managers but there is a significant impact of epic values on their personal values. These further have their influence on the servant leadership values of the Managers in organizations. The socio-demographic factors have no significant influence on the Managers' epic values but have significant impact on Managers' personal values. The present research has immense scope for future research on great epics of India from which many corporate culture and value based inputs can be drawn. It is expected that these popular epics extend many opportunities and guidelines for Managers in decision making, ethical dilemmas and create best corporate cultures in business world.

Keywords--- Servant Leadership, Epic Values, Personal Values, Great Epics of India.

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a buzzword all around the world – in business, politics, education and everywhere. The concept of leadership has been derived from the disciplines such as Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Political science, etc. Indian Epics can be identified as a major source of leadership styles, especially the style of 'Servant Leadership'. The Leadership styles as per the western researches are; Charismatic, Benevolent, Democratic, Transactional, Transformational, Participative, Free-reign, Laissez Faire, etc. The basic models are drawn from the corporate fields and set ups where individuals come together, work and contribute to the accomplishment of common objectives. Many studies identified servant leadership style to be the more reliable and result oriented style in organizational arenas.But, the reflections of servant leadership are encrypted in the famous epics of India. The qualities of characters such as Krishna from Mahabharata, Rama from Ramayana, Bharatha from Ramayana, role of Pandavas in Mahabharata during their period of exile stand as examples of Servant Leadership style.The present study makes an attempt to find out these replications of servant leadership values among the Managers drawn from the great epics of India.

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1.1. Servant Leadership

As per the modern literature, the concept of servant leadership is articulated by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1904. He proposed that the best leadership would act as servants first. The pivotal characteristics of a servant leader incudes listening, persuasion, intuitive, appropriate language, and evolve rational outcomes. He stated that servant leadership is universal and it is for people of all faiths and can be implemented in any type of organization and institution.

Based on the expressions of Robert K. Greenleaf, meticulous efforts are put forward to find the reflections of Servant Leadership styles from the Hindu mythology and from renowned classics of India.

1.2. A Glance at Servant Leadership and Ancient Epics of India

There are many instances in the ancient epics where the eminent characters stood as examples of servant leadership.

1.2.1. Servant Leadership and Ramayana

Ramayana is one of the most prominent and reliable works written by Maharishi Valmiki, a famous sage. He presented the important values and idealistic principles a leader should hold for causing a greater good to the society. Rama is the elder and most eligible son of king Dasaratha to hold the crown of Ayodhya. He killed many demons and raakshasas for the welfare of the mankind. The characteristics of King Sri Rama manifest the servant leadership qualities. In many instances, the King had shown his stewardship, persuasiveness, foresight, empathy and community building which are the true genres of a servant leadership.

When he was crowned as the king of Ayodhya by his father, he projected his stewardship. He persuaded the citizens of Ayodhya to maintain integrity when he went on exile (Vanavasam) on his step-mother's wish. He had shown empathy to Sugriva, the monkey king who was miserable, dejected and overpowered by his elder brother Vali. Every illustration of Sri Rama's behaviour and reliability exhibits his contribution to build an ethical community. All in all,this evidently shows the true nature of Servant Leadership which is encrypted in the epics drafted centuries ago.

1.2.2. Servant Leadership and Mahabharata

Mahabharata, the mega ancient epic of India has put forward many characters thatstood as living examples of servant leadership. Krishna, the most powerful character is an active example of servant leadership. Krishna acted as the charioteer of Arjuna's vehicle 'Kapidhwaja'. When Arjuna was in dilemma to wedge a war with his own kith and kin, he approached Krishna. Krishna being a charioteer offered Arjuna supreme knowledge and path to gain prosperity, success, growth and right policy. Overall, it can be identified that the role played by Krishna was Servant Leadership. A servant leader always keeps calm, stable and confident when the disciple or follower is in tension, confusion and depression.

Servant Leaders' being forgiving, and more importantly understanding, their employees are able to learn from their mistakes, hence their personal growth and changed behaviour within the organization.

1.3. An Analysis of Successful Indian CEOs as Servant Leaders

When it comes to the successful CEOs of Indian Companies and also CEOs of foreign companies of Indian origin, the reflections of our ancient epics can be invariably related. Though the modern business world leaders may not imitate the true characteristics of Heroes of Indian epics, the values through which they nurture, develop their organizations truly stand as an illustration of servant leadership qualities in them.The CEOs of modern era, such as Sundar Pichai (Google), Shantanu Narayen (Adobe Systems Inc.), Satya Nadella (Microsoft), Sanjay Kumar Jha (Motorola Mobility), George Kurian (Netapp), Nikesh Arora (Palo Alto Networks), and many others manifest the true nature of servant leaders. The successful journey of these leaders as individuals and CEOs of global companies clearly indicates the significant traces of great Indian epics in their personal values which are imbibed and reflected in their workplaces.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Servant Leadership has been popular since two decades. Many researchers have worked on the concept of leadership and put forward many perspectives of leadership. It is obvious from the studies that leadership is not a new concept in India and there are no specific studies on Servant Leadership with reference to great epics of India in relation to modern context of corporate life. The little relevant surveys so far conducted are presented in this review collection;

Harsha Verma (2013, stated that in the changing dynamic world and many uncertainties, the two ancient epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata serve as anessential instruments of reflection and inner guidance in conditions of conflicts and financial decisions. Further, they pointed out that life, politics, society, culture of not only India but the whole of South-east Asia is influenced by these great epics.

There is a paper written by Balakrishnan and Muniapan (2007) in which they discussed Transformational Leadership Style demonstrated by Sri Rama in Valmiki Ramayana. This epic stands as an example of Transformational Leadership Style since history and it still inspire millions of Indian.

Sharma (2000) rightly stated that leadership is culture bound and the effectiveness of leadership is deeply enrooted in the culture and soil of the country where it is exercised.

Subhash Sharma (2002) has also discussed a theme called Corporate Rishi Leadership Model, An Indian model for corporate development and ethical leadership.

In a study conducted by Kumar Alok (2014), evidently analysed and stated that theorists give weightage to participation over direction as a true attribute of effective leadership. There are a number of studies on leadership styles, but no study is identified to be taken up so faron Servant Leadership especially towards finding its reflections from great epics of India. Hence, an attempt is made to find out whether there is a correlation between the values of servant leadership encrypted in ancient epics of India and contemporary Managers approach as Servant leaders in today's organizations.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Objectives

1. To understand the Managers' personal values at workplace;

2. To examine the Managers' Values drawn from the great epics;

3. To analyse the association between the Managers' personal values and values drawn from the Epics;

4. To find out the impact of socio-demographic factors on personal values and Epic values of Managers at workplace;

3.2. Hypotheses

H_0: There is no significant impact of Personal Values on Values drawn from Epics by Managers related to servant leadership.

H_0: There is no significant influence of socio demographic factors on personal Values of Managers.

H_0: There is no significant association between socio demographic factors and values drawn from Epics by Managers.

3.3. Data Collection

The data for the present study is collected from the Managers of the select cities of Andhra Pradesh (Vijayawada), Tamil Nadu (Chennai) and Karnataka (Bangalore) through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is generated among the respondents via mail and the responses are collected.

The secondary sources such as magazines, websites, company journals and reports, articles published in various newspapers are also considered for recording a purposeful interpretation of the research study.

3.4. Sample Size

A Sample size 120 Managers of select companies situated in Bangalore, Vijayawada, and Chennai cities are taken for the study. Most of the Managers are contacted through e-mails.

3.5. Sampling Techniques

A Stratified Random Sampling Method is adopted for the present study. A sample of 40 respondents' (Managers) from each region is considered under the study.

3.6. Statistical Analysis

Collected data is analysed using appropriate statistical tools like frequency tables Cross tabulations, Percentages, Chi-square tests, and diagrammatic representations using SPSS version 20. Obtained results are properly concluded at respective levels of significance.

3.7. Future Implications for Research

There is an immense scope for the future researchers to conduct extensive studies in this sphere of Indian great epics. Indian epics have great influence not only on Indians but also looked as an ideal and guiding philosophy of

life by many people across the world. Researchers may focus on the areas such as corporate life style, work life balance, spirituality and productivity, human relations, etc. in relation to great epics of India.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In view of the above objectives, the data is drawn and a thorough analysis is made to understand the values drawn from great epics of India and their influence on the personal values owned and implemented by the Managers of the organizations. Further, specific questions on qualities of servant leadership are drawn to find out whether the Managers exhibit such characteristics at their workplaces.

Table 4.1 represents the Managers socio-demographic details. Majority of the Managers and supervisors belong to the age groups above 40 years. 41-50 years include 35 per cent and above 50 years comprise 31.7 per cent. 55 per cent of the Managers are Male and 45 per cent are Female Managers. More details on the basis of education, experience, region and type of family are exhibited in the table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Distribution of the Managers on the Basis of Socio-demographic Factors; Age, Gender, Education, Experience, Region, Type of Family

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age wise		
21 - 30	12	10.0
31 – 40	28	23.3
41 - 50	42	35.0
Above 50	38	31.7
Gender wise		
Male	66	55.0
Female	54	45.0
Experience wise		
Below 5 Years	12	10.0
6 -10 Years	26	21.7
11 – 20 Years	36	30.0
21 – 30 Years	22	18.3
Above 30 Years	24	20.0
Education wise		
Below Graduation	20	16.7
Graduation and Above	80	83.3
Region wise		
Rural	18	15.0
Semi Urban	34	28.3
Urban	68	56.7
Type of Family		
Joint Family	46	38.3
Nucleus Family	74	61.7
Total	**120**	**100**

Table 4.2: Impact of Managers' Age on Values from Epics

Chi-square value	p-value	Values from Epics			Total
12.828[aNS]	0.118	Low	Moderate	High	
Age	**21-30 years**	4	8	0	12
		3.3%	7.0%	0.0%	10.0%
	31-40 years	6	20	2	28
		5.0%	17.0%	2.0%	23.3%
	41-50 years	2	36	4	42
		2.0%	30.0%	3.3%	35.0%
	Above 50 years	2	34	2	36
		2.0%	28.3%	2.0%	30.0%
Total		**14**	**98**	**8**	**120**
		12.0%	**82.0%**	**7.0%**	**100%**

*significant at 0.05% level

**significant at 0.01% level

NS - not significant

Age is one of the vital factors that determine the level of perception, thoughts and values charted by the individuals. Hence, the servant leadership values drawn from the great epics are correlated with age of the Managers and it was found out that there is no significant impact of age on the Epic values of the Managers. The application of Chi-square test evidently shows that there is no significant impact of age on the same.

Table 4.3: Relationship between the Region of the Managers' and Values from Epics

Chi-square value	p-value	Values from Epics			Total
17.797[a*]	0.001	Low	Moderate	High	
Region of the Manager	**Urban**	2	14	2	18
		2.0%	12.0%	2.0%	10.0%
	Semi Urban	10	24	6	34
		8.3%	20.0%	5.0%	28.3%
	Rural	2	60	0	68
		2.0%	50.0%	0.0%	57.0%
Total		**14**	**98**	**8**	**120**
		12.0%	**82.0%**	**7.0%**	**100%**

India is a vast country with clear diversification of regions into urban, semi urban and rural areas. It is assumed that the rural regions are more ethnic and conventional safeguarding the norms, traditions &cultural values of the society. Hence, an assessment is made in this context and it is clear from the statistical analysis that region has significant impact at 0.001% on the Epic values upheld by the managers. 50 per cent of the Managers from rural regions have moderate level of Epic values of servant leadership compared to urban region with 12 per cent and semi urban region with 20 per cent respectively.

Table 4.4: Association between the Managers' Age and Personal Values

Chi-square value	p-value	Personal Values			Total
30.347^a*	0.000	Low	Moderate	High	
Age	**21-30 years**	6	6	0	12
		5.0%	5.0%	0.0%	10.0%
	31-40 years	2	22	4	28
		2.0%	18.3%	3.3%	23.3%
	41-50 years	10	30	2	42
		8.3%	25.0%	2.0%	35.0%
	Above 50 years	4	24	10	38
		3.3%	20.0%	8.3%	32.0%
Total		**22**	**82**	**16**	**120**
		18.3%	**68.3%**	**13.3%**	**100%**

An assessment of the age of the Managers and its influence on their personal values is made. It is found out through the application of Chi-square test that age has remarkable influence on personal values of the Managers. 35 per cent of the Managers pertaining to the age 41 – 50 years possess personal values exhibited at workplace. 32 per cent of Managers with above 50 years of age have personal values which represent servant leadership qualities.

Table 4.5: Impact of Managers' Experience and Personal Values

Chi-square value	p-value	Personal Values			Total
37.799^a*	0.000	Low	Moderate	High	
Experience of the Manager	**Below 5 years**	6	6	0	12
		5.0%	5.0%	0.0%	10.0%
	6 -10 years	4	20	2	26
		3.3%	17.0%	2.0%	22.0%
	11- 20 years	6	30	0	36
		5.0%	25.0%	0.0%	30.0%
	21 -30 years	4	8	10	22
		3.3%	6.6%	8.3%	18.3%
	Above 30 years	2	18	4	24
		2.0%	15.0%	3.3%	20.0%
Total		**22**	**82**	**16**	**120**
		18.3%	**68.3%**	**13.3%**	**100%**

Analysis of impact of Managers' Experience on the personal values while dealing with the people at work is presented in Table 4.5. The results indicate that there is a significant impact of experience on personal values of the Managers. The application of Chi-square test presents the same.

Table 4.6: Association between the Managers' Education and Personal Values

Chi-square value	p-value	Personal Values			Total
9.765^a*	0.008	Low	Moderate	High	
Education	**Below Graduation**	8	8	4	20
		6.6%	6.6%	3.3%	17.0%
	Graduation and above	14	74	12	100
		12.0%	62.0%	10.0%	83.3%
Total		**22**	**82**	**16**	**120**
		12.0%	**82.0%**	**7.0%**	**100%**

The above table 4.6 shows that education of the Managers has no significant impact on the personal values of the Managers. There is no doubt that education imparts the higher values in individuals. The same is tested with the application of Chi-square test where 83.3 per cent of the Managers with graduation and above qualification have

personal values and 17 per cent of below graduated Managers have personal values related to servant leadership. The results indicate that education has no impact on personal values of the Managers.

Table 4.7: Impact of Type of Family on Personal Values of the Managers

Chi-square value	p-value	Personal Values			Total
15.921[a]	0.000	Low	Moderate	High	
Type of Family	Joint Family	14 12.0%	32 27.0%	0 0.0%	46 38.3%
	Nucleus Family	8 6.6%	50 42.0%	16 7.0%	74 62.0%
Total		**22 12.0%**	**82 82.0%**	**16 7.0%**	**120 100%**

There is a general assumption in Indian society that joint families impart values to their members. But in table 4.7 the statistical verification with the use of Chi-square test demonstrate that Managers hailing from nucleus families (62 per cent) have more personal values than Managers belonging to Joint Families (38.3 per cent). This analysis breaks the misconception about joint families' greater impact on personal values of individuals.

Table 4.8: Association between the Personal Values of Managers and Values from Epics

Chi-square value	p-value	Personal Values			Total
20.770[a]	*0.000*	*Low*	*Moderate*	*High*	
Values from Epics	Low	0 0.0%	12 10.0%	2 2.0%	14
	Moderate	16 7.0%	68 57.0%	14 12.0%	98 82.0%
	High	6 5.0%	2 2.0%	0 0.0%	8 6.6%
Total		**22 12.0%**	**82 82.0%**	**16 7.0%**	**120 100%**

Values of an individual are defined as personal values and Epic Values (values drawn from Epics). In this present analysis, a segregation of values is made under personal head and values drawn from the Indian great epics. A thorough analysis is made to understand the influence of these epics on Managers at workplace. Certain parameters manifesting the knowledge pursued by the Managers from the epics are gathered and are accordingly assessed. It is interesting to discover that the personal values of Managers have correlation with the values drawn from the great Epics of India. The application of statistical tool Chi-square test in Table 4.8 has clearly proved that there is a significant relationship between personal values and epic values which in turn contribute to the inputs to the Managers to depict servant leadership qualities at workplace.

V. KEY FINDINGS

The qualities of servant leadership originate from the personal values held by the Managers. But still an attempt is made to find out whether there is any impact of great epics of India on the servant leadership style the Managers display at workplaces. Further, the impact of socio-demographic factors on Managers personal and epic values is also analysed. A special focus is made on the influence of parents' education and occupation on the values of the Managers.

- The study presents interesting findings about the Managers values of servant leadership. The socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, education and experience have no significant impact on the epic values of the Managers. But the region from which the Managers hail has a significant influence on their values.

- The analysis shows that Managers belonging to rural regions possess greater epic values.The analysis shows that age has more influence on the personal values of the Managers rather than Epic values.

- Managers of high age groups have more personal values than Managers of low age groups.

- Experienced Managers have more personal values compared to low experienced Managers. Managers of nucleus family have more personal values contrary to managers from joint families.

- Though there is no specific influence of socio-demographic factors on the epic values of the managers, the personal values are very much influenced by the same.

- Further, the Epic values and Personal values correlate with each other clearly. It can be therefore inferred that the servant leadership style of Managers has influence of great epics of India.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study establishes a relationship between the great epics of India and their influence on servant leadership characteristics manifested by the Managers located in select cities of South India. Overall, it can be concluded that though there is no direct relationship between the great epics and servant leadership characteristics of the Managers, the correlation found between the personal values and epic values indicate that there are reflections of servant leadership from great epics of India. Servant leadership values are recommended as the true essence of the Managers of corporate world. Our Indian Epics carry the spirit which is depicted in every walks of our life. Reading and learning from these epics are to be practiced. As generations passby, the values from epics are not valued more significantly and also due to new flair to imitate western culture hasinfluence on the present generation. Hence, a much practical, value based and social consciousness is required to restore the values from great epics of India in organizations.

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