

Learnings from Sundar Kand of Ramcharit Manas and its Application in our Lives

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Abstract

This research paper is an effort to extract learnings from Sundar Kand (fifth chapter in sequence and most adorable chapter of 'Ramcharit Manas' written by Goswami Tulsidas) to understand its importance for day to day life of human beings. During the analysis of the said chapter it is found that there are several stanzas (choupaiyas and dohas) which are either directly or indirectly suggesting certain specific type of habits and practices to be followed by all as a part of main story of Shri Ram.

Introduction

Ramcharit Manas was written by Goswami Tulsidas. It consists of seven chapters named Bala Kand, Ayodhya Kand, Aranya Kand, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand, Lanka Kand and Uttar Kand. It is written in pure Avadhi (a regional dialect of Uttar Pradesh). The stanzas are called choupaiyas, broken by dohas or couplets with occasional sortha and chhand.

Generally Indians are aware of the story of 'Shri Ram' mentioned in 'Ramcharit Manas'. Shri Ram was the son of Dashrath, the King of Ayodhya. Shri Ram was the heir to the throne. When he was about to be made the King of Ayodhya, his step mother Kaikeyi intervened. Once, Kaikeyi had saved the life of King Dashrath in the battlefield and then Dashrath had told Kaikeyi at that time to ask for any two vows, to which, Kaikeyi told that she will ask for it when needed. When the time for Shri Ram to become the King being the eldest of all brothers came, Kaikeyi's mind was poisoned by her mistress Manthara. Influenced by Manthara, Kaikeyi first asked Dashrath to make his son Bharat as King of Ayodhya and then she asked Dashrath to send Shri Ram for 14 years of vanvasa (exile). When Shri Ram came to know about the two vows from his father he went to exile with his wife Sita and younger brother Laxman. While living in the forest, Sita was kidnapped by the King of Devils Ravan. Sundar Kand chapter of Ramcharit Manas primarily comprises of the search of Sita. Hanuman searches the Sita and informs about her wellbeing to Shri Ram.

This paper extracts some of the stanzas from the Sundar Kand which are highly important for us and learnings from them should be applied in our lives.

Leaning from Sundar Kand and its Application in our Lives

Fifteen selected learnings from the Sundar Kand are given below. Further, these learnings have been compiled maintaining the sequence of the events as mentioned in Sundar Kand.

Learning-1

Sundar Kand starts with the jump of Hanuman from one side of sea shore to Lanka on motivation of Jambvant.

जलनिधि रघुपति दूत बिचारी ।
तैं मैनाक होहि श्रमहारी ।

While hanuman was in the sky, the god of ocean spoke to mount Mainaka to come out of ocean to the surface and provide the place to hanuman (as he is Ram's emissary) so that he can rest for a while.

हनूमान तेहि परसा कर पुनि कीन्ह प्रनाम ।
राम काजु कीन्हें बिनु मोहि कहाँ बिश्राम ॥

Hanuman simply touched the mountain with his hand and made homage to it by saying “There is no rest to me till I have accomplished Sri Ram's work.”

Learning: Goal orientation/ Work first-As mentioned in above stanza hanuman does not stop for rest prior to completing his work. We can also acquire this habit of goal orientation and avoid unwanted rest in our routine, so that work can be placed in top priority in our routine.

Learning-2

When hanuman moves ahead in search of Sita, Devtas (gods) decided to test his strength and intelligence and sent 'Sursa' the She-devil (actually mother of serpents) for this purpose. She stopped hanuman and decided to eat him.

जस जस सुरसा बदन बढ़ावा ।
तासु दून कपि रूप देखावा ॥
सत जोजन तेहि आनन कीन्हा ।
अति लघु रूप पवनसुत लीन्हा ॥

She-devil opened her mouth to eat hanuman and to get rid of this hanuman increased his size

to the double of her mouth. This competition took place for long. When she further opened her mouth eight hundred miles wide Hanuman took a very minute form and moved inside her mouth and thereafter came outside.

Learning: Leave Ego- As written in above mentioned incident, Sursa and Hanuman both were demonstrating their powers and suddenly Hanuman took a small size. Instead of showing his powers Hanuman became very small (left his ego of being big and powerful). Finally Sursa became happy on such behaviour of Hanuman and let her go on his work. In our lives also, if we can reduce our ego level then we may be liked by others. Possibly no body will create hurdles in our work or life.

Learning-3

When Hanuman reaches on the other side of sea he face an encounter with She-devil 'Lankini'.

मुठिका एक महा कपि हनी ।
रुधिर बमत धरनीं ढनमनी ॥
पुनि संभारि उठी से लंका ।
जोरि पानि कर बनिय ससंका ॥

When Lankini stopped Hanuman, later beat him single handedly which resulted injury in the mouth of She-devil and she started bleeding. Somehow she got her senses and requested to Hanuman to leave her. Hanuman left her and moved inside the Lanka.

Learning: Don't overuse your powers/ Put only needed efforts- Hanuman slapped lankini just once and avoided making serious injury to her. In the same manner we should not make use of our powers unnecessarily. For example- If a salesman advises to prospective customer more than required, he may loose that customer. If a teacher tries to teach a student more than student's abilities result will not be as per expectation.

Learning-4

Hanuman enters into Lanka again taking minute size. When he was moving around the Lanka, he saw the house of Vibhishan (brother of Ravan).

भवन एक पुनि दीख सुहावा ।
हरि मंदिर तहँ भिन्न बनावा ॥
रामायुध अंकित गृह सोभा बरनि न जाइ ।
नव तुलसिका बृंद तहँ देख हरष कपिराइ ॥

He saw a strange house which was so different than others in its appearance. Walls of the house were painted with the weapons (bow and arrow) of Shri Ram and a new plant of 'Tulsi' was placed in the patio of the house. This made Hanuman extremely happy.

Learning: Observe minute details- Hanuman was observing every minute details in Lanka during search for Sita. In the process he came to know about Vibhishan who later on helped Shri Ram during the war in defeating Ravan. If we are also careful about the tiny details of the surrounding environment we can also make most of it. This habit can also be termed as always staying alert or living-up in present moment which results into happiness in present time, lack of worries and best possible outcome of the concerned situation and action.

Learning-5

During interaction Vibhishan states that:

सुनहु पवनसुत रहनि हमारी ।
जिमि दसनन्हि महुँ जीभ बिचारी ॥
तामस तनु कछु साधन नाहीं ।
प्रीति न पद सरोज मन माहीं ॥

Vibhishan talks about his life style and clarifies that “my condition is like tongue that lives in the midst of the teeth”, as he was staying with devils and trying to live-up a sacred life which was against the nature of devils. He further says that by nature he is a devil that's why he is unable to remember the name of Almighty God. He says that he is not even having affection in the lotus like feet of God.

Learning: Humility/ humbleness- As observed during the story, Vibhishan was a great sage and a follower of Shri Ram. But the manner in which he expresses his limitation and weaknesses, being born in the family of devils, demonstrates his humbleness. Later on in the story, Vibhishan was appreciated by Shri Ram for his devotion and Shri Ram rewarded Vibhishan by declaring him the king of Lanka. We can also learn from such instances that we should be humble which can ultimately result into long term success in our lives.

Learning-6

Hanuman came to know about the location of Sita with the help of Vibhishan. He again took a minute size and sat on the tree under which Sita was sitting.

कपि करि हृदयें बिचार दीन्हि मुद्रिका डारि तब ।
 रामचन्द्र गुन बरनैँ लागा ।
 सुनतहिँ सीता कर दुख भागा ॥
 तब हनुमत निकट चलि गयऊ ।
 फिरि बैठीँ मन बिसमय भयऊ ॥

Hanuman primarily gave a thought about the manner in which he should interact with Sita. Firstly he dropped a ring of Shri Ram on which name 'Ram' was mentioned. Sita identified the ring and became anxious with mix feeling of joy and sorrow. Thereafter Hanuman narrated complete story of Shri Ram from very beginning, in form a song. Sita lost her grief listening such a narration of Sri Ram's life. Then hanuman went near Sita and she got surprised by looking at him. Later on she became very happy after getting the message of Sri Ram.

Learning: Step wise attainment of desired goals- The manner in which Hanuman approached Sita was very systematic and strategic. Also in our lives and career if we set up a goal and try to achieve them in step wise manner we can realize them comfortably. As said by kabirdas-“Dheere dheere re mana, dheere sab kuch hoy; Maali sinche sou ghada, ritu aaye phal hoy.” This means everything takes place in slow and steady manner and results will come step wise that too at the right time only.

Learning-7

After talking with Sita, Hanuman asked to Sita:

सुनहु मातु मोहि अतिसय भूखा ।
 लागि देखि सुंदर फल रूखा ॥
 सुनु सुत करहिँ बिपिन रखवारी ।
 परस सुभट रजनीचर भारी ॥
 तिन्ह कर भय माता मोहि नाहीं ।
 जौँ तुम्ह सुख मानहु मन माहीं ॥

He says that “Mother, I am feeling extremely hungry and there are so many trees laden with delicious fruits”. Sita says,” Listen son, this grove is guarded by most valiant and mighty demons.” Hanuman replies to Sita that he is not afraid of them if she gives him permission to eat.

Learning: Take your food even amidst of work or adversities- Hanuman tried to took his food when he felt hungry. This is an important learning for all of us to not to skip our food at

the right time. This is quite a frequent practice among professionals as well as corporate employees to skip their meals or to have substandard diet. This practice should be avoided and timely intake of suitable food should be preferred for attaining bigger tasks.

Learning-8

While eating fruits Hanuman began to break down trees. Guards tried to stop Hanuman. He crushed them. Thereafter a son of Ravan 'Indrajeet' (another name Meghnaad) attacked on him with Brahmastra (weapon of Lord Brahma).

ब्रह्म अस्त्र तेहिं साँधा कपि मन कीन्ह बिचार ।
जौ न ब्रह्मसर मानऊँ महिमा मिटइ अपार ॥

Hanuman thought that if he will not be caught by this weapon this will be disrespect to Lord Brahma.

Learning: Have respect towards elders/seniors/ parents- As per ancient stories Hanuman was given a vow by Lord Brahma that no weapon can harm him. Easily, the influence of the weapon could have been neutralized by Hanuman. But when he was attacked by the weapon of Brahma by Indrajeet, he gave due respect to the Brahma's weapon. As a result, his whole body was tied up with rope. This teaches us to be humble and grateful towards our elders including seniors, teachers, friends and parents, especially the ones who gave us something (material or non-material) during the life.

Learning-9

When Hanuman was tied up with rope, he was taken to the Ravan's court. Ravan's court was very huge and full of strange visions.

कर जोरें सुर दिसिप बिनीता ।
भृकुटि बिलोकत सकल सभीता ॥
देखि प्रताप न कपि मन संका ।
जिमि अहिगन महुँ गरुड़ असंका ॥

Devils and devtas (gods) were standing in the court with folded hands and scared of Ravan's unfavourable eyebrow movement. But Hanuman was indifferent with such sight and walked like fearless Garuda (king of birds) amidst number of serpents.

Learning: Maintain your confidence even in hardships- This stanza teaches to maintain significant level of confidence even in worst situation. Hanuman was surrounded by devils

but even then he was not at all worried. Similarly if human being maintain their calm of mind in difficult situations, they can attain success. For example- If interviewee during interview, examinee during examination and corporate people during important decisions maintain their confidence and mental peace, they can attain ultimate success invariably.

Learning-10

In the court, Ravan asked Hanuman that with whose permission you have destroyed the trees in Ashok Vatika. Hanuman answered:

खायउँ फल प्रभु लागी भूँखा ।
कपि सुभाव तैं तोरेउँ रूखा ॥

Hanuman answered “I was simply eating the fruits as I was hungry. Being a monkey I have shaken the trees and they came on ground”. Hanuman clarified that he was not at fault.

Learning: Live-up your personality- This learning has been pretty well explained in Bhagvat Gita by the term '*Swabhavgat karma*'. This learning states that we should avoid imitating others and follow our natural behaviour. If we will try to imitate others; we will not be respected like others nor we will be able to live-up our own personality.

Learning-11

Hanuman suggested Ravan to adore and worship Shri Ram. Ravan laughed at Hanuman and made joke of Hanuman's suggestion.

जदपि कही कपि अति हित बानी ।
भगति बिबेक बिरति नय सानी ॥
बोला विहसि महा अभिमानी ।
मिला हमहि कपि गुर बड़ ग्यानी ॥

Although Hanuman gave him exceedingly valuable advice filled with devotion, discretion and dispassion. Even then Ravan laughed on this suggestion and said “We have found very wise Guru as monkey.”

Learning: Knowledge may come from even the smallest entity- Seeing the scale of Ravan's empire, Hanuman (a monkey) may seem quite an unimportant creature. But he was giving very reasonable as well as justifiable suggestion to Ravan to give Sita back to Shri Ram. In our lives also we should give attention to different persons in our surrounding and should try to acknowledge the correct advice. Once we have understood the reality, we should try to put the same into practice.

Learning-12

Ravan along with most of his ministers in the court of Ravan became angry on Hanuman and started saying that he should be killed. Ravan ordered to kill Hanuman. In the meantime Vibhishan along with counsellors came in between.

नाइ सीस करि बिनय बहूता ।
नीति बिरोध न मारिअ दूता ॥

Bowing his head to Ravan, Vibhishan said that it is against statecrafts to kill a messenger. Thereafter Ravan ordered to punish Hanuman by burning his tail. Hanuman burnt most of the Lanka with his burning tail, later on.

Learning: Follow the social norms and discipline- As Ravan tried to punish Hanuman (against acceptable social and governmental norms to give immunity to messenger) which resulted into significant loss to his empire in form of property and fear generation in the minds of citizens. In the same fashion if we try to violate generally acceptable and socially beneficial norms, we will always be in loss. For example if we obey and believe in simple natural laws like 'early to sleep and early to rise' and 'Health is wealth' we may simply attain good health.

Learning-13

After burning important locations of the Lanka Hanuman went to Sita and assured her that Shri Ram will come soon with his army. Thereafter Hanuman went back to Shri Ram and informed him about location and wellbeing of Sita. Then Shri Ram says:

सुनु कपि तोहि समान उपकारी ।
नहिं कोउ सुर नर मुनि तनुधारी ॥
प्रति उपकार करौं का तोरा ।
सनमुख होइ न सकत मन मोरा ॥

He says “No one endowed with a body; god human being or sage; has put me under such an obligation, as you have done.” He further says “how I can repay your obligation, even I can't show my mind to you.”

Learning: Follow the instructions of your master/ employer/ parents & do your duty- Hanuman completed work of Shri Ram and the later came under his obligation. Similarly, if we work whole heartedly towards our duties and responsibilities and accomplish our job, others will respect us. We will be like a precious asset to others and they would never like to lose us. They may also like to do something for us.

Learning-14

Shri Ram ordered his army to move towards Lanka. Shortly, his army reached to the sea shore. Mandodari (wife of Ravan) became worried and tried to convince Ravan that he should return back Sita to Shri Ram. She said that she is noticing several ominous happenings in her surroundings. Then Ravan replied:

सभय सुभाउ नारि कर साचा ।
मंगल महुँ भय मन अति काचा ॥

Ravan laughed at such worries of Mandodari and said “It is truly said that women are timorous by nature. They may be fearful even on auspicious occasions.”

Learning: Give respect to ladies & listen to them- Ravan's wife Mandodari gave him righteous advice and tried to save him from adversities. But Ravan made mockery of women nature and underestimated their personality and opinions. Ultimately, later on, he suffered on account of such behaviour. Therefore it is wise enough for everyone to give ear on sensible advices of females without undervaluing their intellect and behaviour.

Learning-15

After having discussion with Mandodari, Ravan moved to his court. There too, he was given suggestion by his brother Vibhishan and his senior minister Malyavan to release Sita. Ravan became very annoyed on such proposal. On the contrary other ministers in the court spoke as per wish of Ravan. It is rightly said in the next stanza that:

सचिव बैद गुर तीनि जौँ प्रिय बोलहिँ भय आस ।
राज धर्म तन तीनि कर होइ बेगिहीं नास ॥

When a secretary/ minister, doctor and guru (spiritual or religious teacher) speak-up pleasing words to a person either due to fear or in hope of rewards, then as a result, condition of state (because of secretary/minister), body (because of Doctor) and religion (because of Guru) gets destroyed. Ravan's wrong actions were supported by most of his subordinates due to fear or greed for rewards and that inflated the ego of Ravan further making him adamant which finally resulted into death of Ravan.

Learning: Accept real advices and don't get trapped with buttering or false appreciation-

While receiving any advice or suggestion, we should be very conscious about the intention of the advisor and should try to understand his real motive. Moreover, we should be able to

differentiate between correct advice and advice given by the advisor in his self-interest. Whereas if somebody (like Doctor, manager, consultant etc.) is giving advice to others he should be very ethical, conscious and follow the correct code of conduct, otherwise, results can be harmful.

Conclusion

Sundar Kand is full of learnings to be followed in our daily lives. Above mentioned learnings is simply a glimpse of that. Any person who wishes to live-up his life with happiness and with those norms which are good for all, he/she may refer Ramcharit Manas (especially Sundar Kand) for the said purpose. If everyone tries to follow practices on the basis of learnings mentioned in Sundar Kand, this world could be a better place to live in.

सकल सुमंगल दायक रघुनायक गुन गान ।
सादर सुनहिं ते तरहिं भव सिंधु बिना जलजान ॥

A recital of the qualities of Shri Ram bestows all blessings. Also those who just respectfully hear them crosses the ocean of human life (which is full of challenges) without any effort.

Reference

'Ramcharit Manas' by Goswami Tulsidas (Gorkhpur: Gita press)