

SACRED SPACE

Ideal Conduct of Lord Ram

Dr. Pradeep Kumar Singh

Those who do not follow the path of conduct manifested by Lord Ram and his family are of no significance to society

All Indians are familiar with Lord Ram. Even those who do not accept Lord Ram as the God, consider him as Maryada Purushottam. Lord Ram's conduct is well known as the ideal son, ideal brother, ideal husband, ideal friend and ideal ruler. The conduct of his family members also seems to be full of idealism. This ideal conduct is the foundation stone of the Sanatan culture. The reading, listening, meditating and practicing the conduct of Lord Ram and his family members with devotion is important for character building in children, youth, elders, men and women, by controlling psychological disorders (appetency, anger, greed, attachment, jealousy-hatred, arrogance etc.) and instilling the virtues (simplicity, humility, seriousness, patience, and devotion to parents & elders, etc.).

Goswami Tulsidas is the most popular saint and poet who presented character and conduct of Lord Ram and his family members in local dialects of the Hindi belt. According to him, those who tell or listen the story dealing with character & conduct of Lord Ram with devotion and careful understanding, will definitely build their own character with ideals of Lord Ram, remain away from the sins, and lead a delightful life.

The comprehensive character of Lord Ram and his family members cannot be summed up in words. According to scholars, it can be divided into three main parts - presentation of ideal conduct in family and public life, destruction of criminals, militants and terrorists, and establishment of Utopia. Success in all the three areas could be possible only because of support and solidarity of the family. Although sometimes there seems to be difference of opinion and personality among the family members, yet their conduct is exemplary for the society. Lord Ram has clarified one more important principle that the family-based duty is superior to personal interest, and the public duty is the superior most. This way, he guided the people trapped in dilemma while taking important decisions.

According to the principle of Karmayoga, one should perform one's duties without being attached to the outcome of actions. The stability of thoughts should be maintained without getting distracted by the outcome - success or failure. Lord Ram followed this practice throughout. Even on successful completion of Yajna of Maharishi Vishwamitra by meeting out punishment to the terrorists causing hindrance or getting success in Dhanush Yajna at Janakpuri, the simplicity of behavior defines his personality. Despite the repeated challenges by Lord Parshuram, the humility of Lord Ram, reflects his distinguished virtue. Compliance to the instructions by his father, King Dashrath and Guru Vashishtha for elevating him to the post of Yuvraj without any excitement, and the very next day, acceptance of the order of 14-year-exile of step mother Kaikeyi (in presence of father in dilemma due to affection) without expressing grief, followed by departure from palace in ascetic attire without any delay, all are the indication of his extreme devotion towards

parents. He tells mother Kaikeyi, "Mother, the son who gets an opportunity to serve his parents is very lucky".

On mother Kaushalya expressing grief for the exile, Lord Ram consoles her commenting "I have been assigned important responsibility by father in the forest region, which shall be very useful to me". His positive approach towards the welfare of the family puts the society towards.

The conduct of family members is also beyond comprehension. Queen Kausalya could have opposed Lord Ram's exile, but she considered the protection of King's integrity and commitment



from being tarnished, as the important family-based duty. She tells Lord Ram "If order for the exile has been passed by your father, being your mother, higher in family status, I overrule it and advise you not to leave. However, if the order has been passed collectively by both father & mother (i.e. to fulfill the commitment given by father to mother), my best wishes for the 14-year-exile to become hundred times delightful than Ayodhya.

The decision of Laxman to accompany Lord Ram during the exile is quite astonishing. Who so ever becomes the king, he would definitely have got a ministry. But such a thought neither comes to Laxman, nor to his mother Sumitra or the royal daughter-in-law Urmila. Stubbornly getting ready to accompany Lord Ram during the exile, represents his extreme affection towards the elder brother. The grant of permission by mother Sumitra along with necessary guidance shows her identity for mother's family-based duty. She advises

"Today onwards consider Sita as your mother and Ram your affectionate father. When Sita and Ram are leaving for exile, your services are no more required in Ayodhya."

Younger brothers Bharat and Shatrughan also display exemplary virtues. Bharat's refusal to coronation, his efforts (with Guru Vashishtha, Minister Sumantra, family members, and general public) to locate Lord Ram and persuade to bring him back for coronation, followed by his return with the sandals of Lord Ram as per instructions of the latter, reflects his immense affection for elder brother, family customs & responsibilities. Further, on return to Ayodhya, installation of the sandals on the throne, their daily worship, and handling the governance seeking their orders for necessary actions, while residing at Nandigram in ascetic attire, etc. manifest his unprecedented sacrifice for the family.

The character of all the family members is really strange. None of the four princes felt attracted towards the throne for 14-year. Although the general public kept blaming Queen Kaikeyi for the crisis, yet Lord Ram put the blame on Lord Brahma. Control over expression is necessary to maintain harmony and avoid bitterness. All the family members - queens, princes and royal daughters-in-law together made unprecedented sacrifice for the family's solidarity. Queen Kaikeyi also felt repentance for 14-year. Everyone considered the family-based duty and the public duty superior for integrity & glory of the dynasty, rising above personal interest.

A lot of sacrifice and efforts have to be made to fulfill major objectives. One should learn dutifulness towards family and society from the family members of Lord Ram. The auspicious festival Ramnavami is the day to understand the conduct of Lord Ram and his family members in the modern perspective and to introspect and take a resolution for self improvement. The conspiracy to break the family was hatched by Manthara, the maidservant who originally belonged to Kekay. Those who do not have attachment with the nation, remain engaged in mischief with selfish motives. Decision makers should apply their own wisdom while taking decision otherwise they may have to repent like Queen Kaikeyi. But in modern India, the captains of democracy, celebrities and highly placed officials do not even apologize for committing wrong & harmful actions with selfish motive. A few among them tender conditional apology under pressure expressing their kindness. Repentance is no more a practice. Children become eligible to take independent decision on attaining the age of 18-year. Media and the constitutional institutions keep putting efforts to ensure equal status, separate identity and participation in decision making for women in family. Although this appears to be ideal, yet all that glitters is not gold. This arrangement can be beneficial to society only when the family members seek guidance from Lord Ram and his family members, because a balance between the rights and the dutifulness is necessary. According to principle of vector science, many vectors working in one direction yield maximum output. The output gets reduced when the vectors act in different directions, and can be zero or even negative. The same principle applies in the social sciences as well.

SOCIETY

Smartphones Stealing Childhood

Umar Afzal Dar

In today's digital age, smartphones have become ubiquitous and are an integral part of our lives. While they offer numerous benefits, there is growing concern among experts that smartphones are having a negative impact on children's development.

Childhood is the period of life that encompasses the years between infancy and adolescence. It is a time of rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional development, during which children acquire fundamental skills and knowledge that form the basis for their future growth and success.

Childhood is marked by play, exploration, and curiosity, as children discover the world around them through their senses and experiences. It is a time when imaginations run wild, and creativity flourishes as children engage in imaginative play and storytelling.

But this childhood didn't remain same as it used to be. In our times we were more lively than today's kids who remain glued to the mobile screens. One of the most significant concerns raised by experts is the impact of smartphones on children's mental health. According to a study conducted by the Royal Society for Public Health, social media use and smartphone dependence are linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and poor sleep quality in children. The study also found that children who spent more than two hours a day on social media were more likely to experience poor mental health than those who spent less time online.

Last week while attending a party, there were more than 100 people and few kids with their parents. The hall was having a pin drop silence, as the kids were busy in watching the cartoons over internet. What if this would have been in our days and we would have certainly a gala time enjoying in playing different physical games and laughing out to the fullest.

Some of the content over the internet particularly over YouTube, Facebook is not watchable at all. We have to take extra care as parents/guardians what our children are watching. These days different mobile applications have parental control and we must certainly use them in order to restrict the content our kids ought to avoid. Kids are so innocent that most of the things they watch have a direct impact on their lives.

I am recalling an article that was published in an international newspaper wherein they have interviewed a child about how he survived in the earthquake when the building collapsed due to earthquake shocks. The kid told that he had watched a cartoon over YouTube in which the cartoon took shelter beneath a table. The kid had replicated the same and he remained beneath a table and he survived. After this article, I got very anxious that what

our kids watch when they take our mobile phones, the comedy having no meaning at all. If your kid is stubborn in watching the content not worthwhile, stop him now or you would have to see the repercussions later on.

The screen time for us and our kids should be very minimal. If you yourself remained stuck to the mobile, you won't control your children from having the same habit. You ought to talk to your kids, play with them, and make them laugh. Don't allow your kids to open your social media accounts at all.

Another issue with smartphones is their effect on children's physical health. The more



time children spend using smartphones, the less time they spend engaging in physical activities such as playing sports or running around outside. This sedentary lifestyle can lead to a host of health problems, including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.. Playing in bright sunshine can also help in the strength of bones and other vitamins necessary for us. While going in the local playground, our children get socialized and this helps them to sustain in the society as lively being rather than an introvert who does n't like to talk to anyone. Furthermore, smartphones can also affect children's cognitive development. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that children who spent more time on screens scored lower on tests assessing cognitive and language skills. The study suggests that excessive screen time may interfere with the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for children's academic success.

In short, we must not take away the childhood of our kids by keeping them locked inside homes and handover mobile phones at very early age. While smartphones offer many benefits, their negative impact on children's development cannot be ignored. Experts have warned of the link between smartphones and poor mental health, physical health, cognitive development, and social development. Therefore, it is essential for parents to limit their children's smartphone use and encourage them to engage in activities that promote healthy development. By doing so, we can help ensure that our children have a happy and healthy childhood. Childhood is a phase which children must enjoy to the fullest and we have to support our children in every possible way to make them enjoy the nature around us.

BOOK-REVIEW

'Vigyan Vidushi'- A befitting tribute to women in science An insight into Duggar culture, heritage

Biju Dharamapalan, Navneeth Kumar Gupta

Over the years, a considerable gender disparity has persisted at all levels of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM) disciplines worldwide. Although women's participation in higher education has increased substantially, they remain underrepresented in STEMM fields. Gender equality has always been a top priority for the United Nations. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will contribute significantly to global economic development and achieving all of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals and targets. Women have significantly contributed to science throughout history and performed groundbreaking research globally. Several of them, such as Marie Curie, Ada Lovelace, and Rosalind Franklin, are well-known. Several other duly commendable research in varied fields like space research, wildlife, and palaeontology mostly considered a male domain area but not as well-known. Despite their outstanding achievements, studies have shown that women in STEMM fields do not move as far in their jobs as males. The participation of women in STEMM fields is influenced by many factors, including their educational pathways and social considerations, such as beginning families, employment and family situations.

Indian women have also made significant contributions to the world of science despite societal odds. Being a conservative society, Indian women faced lots of problems in the research community and family. Even those who became successful in science have either fought rigorously for their rights to follow their passion. There are very few who receive support from their parents or husbands. Unfortunately, even in this 21st century, women are considered a means of producing progenies in many families. Many women have to compromise for their passion for maintaining their family intact. Understanding how our successful ladies overcome their travails will inspire the younger generation to climb the ladders of science. Several of the pioneering women in science today have set the standard for decades. Due to their unwavering dedication, sheer determination, and courage, they have gained the world's respect; many have given up their happiness to further the advancement of science.

In this background, the book Vigyan Vidushi - 75 Women Trailblazers of Science, published by Vigyan Prasar, gains significance. The book will not only act as a historical document on Women in Indian science but also as a guide for younger ladies to tackle the issues they may face in their science profession. The title aptly named 'Vigyan Vidushi' taken from the Hindi word 'Vigyan', which means science, and Vidushi, which means learned and knowledgeable women, conveys the essence of the content. This book honours various women scientists who made significant contributions to the development of their country from pre-independent era to the post-independent era. Vigyan Vidushi provides information about the works of 75 great Indian women scientists including the legends like Janaki Ammal, Kamala Bhagwat Sohoni, Bibha, Asma Chatterjee, Anna Mani, Rajeswari Chatterjee, Debala Mitra, Purnima Sinha and others. It also highlights 35 'Future Hopes' women scientists who are born in this century and will take country forward to the next century. It is a riveting story of the lives and struggles of women in science. It's a story about ladies who don't give up in the face of adversity.

Vigyan Vidushi is an effort to highlight the lives of women scientists who have championed the cause of science and are pioneers in various ways. They followed their passion by choosing a career path that was traditionally reserved for men, going to school in a field where they were outnumbered by men, relocating to a different country, or studying a field like engineering or medicine. The book is an unprecedented compilation of personal narratives. Several of these women's stories begin in the unique times of

British rule, when advanced education was reserved for the elite and primarily men. The pursuit of knowledge has never been bestowed on any gender. It is important to remember that even in the pre-independence era, girls' access to school was severely limited by backwards social and cultural practices. As a result, it is important to honour the contributions of women educators and social reformers who championed the cause of female literacy. These pioneering ladies paved the way for the next generation by illuminating the path to education for girls and bringing public awareness to the importance of supporting girls' access to education. Women's education in India is often credited to Savitribai Phule, who with her husband Jyotiba Phule established the first girls' school in Pune, Maharashtra, in 1848. Suniti Devi, the Maharani of Cooh Behar, and her husband founded Suniti College (1881), and the Maharani Girls' High School in Darjeeling is another illustrious institution (1908). Sarala Ray and her sister Lady Abala Bose both advocated for the education of women; Sarala Ray founded Gokhale Memorial School in Kolkata in 1920. When Abala had her own application to Calcutta Medical College rejected, this did not dampen her enthusiasm for the cause of women's education. They weren't researchers or scientists, but their advocacy for girls' education helped create the groundwork for future generations and challenge social conventions in ways that made it easier for more people to pursue careers in STEM. One notable example is that Kadambini Basu Ganguly, the first female medical school graduate in India, was accepted by the same Calcutta Medical College that had rejected Abala Bose (1883). By 2022, we will have come quite a way in our efforts to honour the achievements of clinician-scientists like Soumya Swaminathan and Gagandeep Kang, who have left permanent marks on the world.

The last 75 years of independence in India's long history is a minuscule period. However, as a nation, we have made prodigious progress in socio-economic indicators of development such as education, science and technology. Per census data, women literacy rose from 8% in 1951 to 65% in 2011. The number of women pursuing science in higher education has increased to 50% (AISHE report, 2019-20). The last three decades have seen a moderate increase in the number of women scientists being hired at research institutions and universities. We have come a long way with women scientists leading the top S&T departments in India, winning prestigious awards and being elected to science academies in India and abroad.

Many initiatives have been initiated to recognise the role of women researchers in establishing the new India, and policymakers and the academic community have aggressively addressed concerns for women in STEMM.

Indian women scientists have covered miles in their quest for independence and equality but still, miles are left to be covered. Vigyan Vidushi is not just another book but a reflection of how women have progressed in science and contributed to its development. In their pursuit, Vidushi broke the traditional socio-cultural norms that were hurdles on their way-deciding not to marry or not have children or living separately from their husbands for the sake of careers.

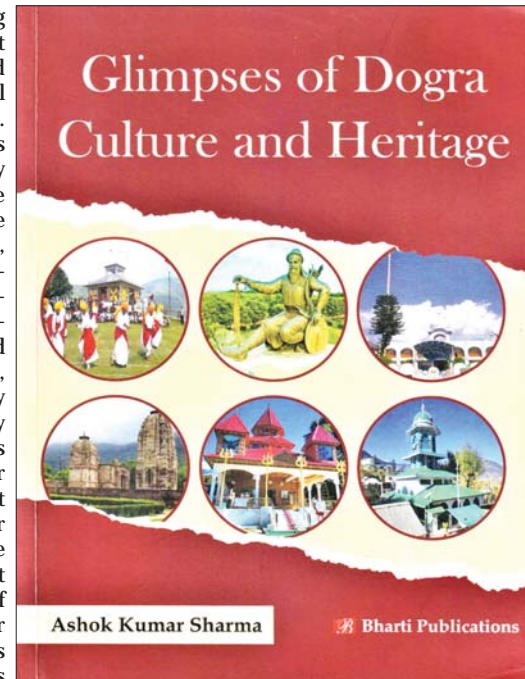
The life these women scientists are a source of inspiration for young women in science and will keep inspiring generations to come. Their quest to pursue a career in science despite all odds, and their propensity to move on against all adversities would indeed inculcate confidence in young women in STEMM. They would also give them the courage not to yield or give upon the restrictive socio-cultural norms.

(The authors are science writer and columnist; and Project Officer at Vigyan Prasar, Noida respectively)

Dr. Sunil Bhardwaj

*Name of the book- Glimpses of Dogra Culture & Heritage
Author- Ashok Kumar Sharma
Publisher-Bharti Publications, New Delhi-110002
Price- (1) Paperback (b/w, printed on 80 GSM paper) - Rs 690.00
(2) Hardbound (coloured, printed on 130 GSM paper) - Rs 1985.00*

There is no skepticism that Duggar has a rich, priceless, assorted and pluralistic culture of its own. The history of Duggar dates way back to the ancient times and its references have been found in the 'Neelmat Puran' and in old scriptures too. In Vedic times, this region is believed to have been a part of Maderesh whose capital was 'Sakala' (the modern Sialkot in Pakistan). Though the rich cultural beliefs, mores, traditions etc have been practised in Duggar since times immemorial, they are evanescent in the wake of modernity, fast and materialistic life and gushing impact of social media on the lives of people. We, Dogras, the inhabitants of Duggar region, are deeply entrenched in our culture and value system. We take pride in following our mores, traditions and beliefs by visiting various shrines belonging to disparate cults, celebrating various festivals and appreciating the architecture, craftsmanship and masonry of forts and palaces built by our ancestors. As such, loss of the important marks of our culture does pain us a lot. It steers us to safeguard our rich & amalgamated culture that the author has brought out in the book 'Glimpses of Dogra Culture & Heritage' for the readers. This book is divided into 14 chapters which have about 90 topics



are on the verge of extinction and so have the festivals of 'Rutt Raade', 'Tamdey', 'Drubari', 'Nag Panchami' etc. Though the institutions such as Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Dogri Sanstha, Dogra Sadar Sabha and the like-all based in Jammu, have played a significant role in the documentation, conservation, preservation and promotion of our unparalleled and priceless culture but the desired results can only be achieved if the people of Duggar at large cling to their culture and inherited values. In this respect, parents and elders have a prominent role to play.

This book has chapters on Dogra-Land & People, Folk Literature in Duggar, Nature Worship in Duggar, Pahari Schools of Painting, Folk Heros, Historical Towns, Historical Forts & Palaces, Fairs and Festivals, Famous Shrines, Local Deities etc which deal with various aspects of Dogra Culture & Heritage. The last chapter 'Miscellany' deals with famous but vanishing marks of Dogra culture, Charpai (Wooden Cot), Wooden Comb, Chinji (Dogra Wrestling Match), Ram Leelas in Duggar, Dogra Pagri and of course, Garhat (The Water Mill) each are illustrated with beautiful photographs. The book has insightful forewords by eminent writers and Padma Shri Awardees, Dr. Jitendra Udhampuri and Professor Shiv Nirmohi, both of whom have done a lot of work in writing and highlighting the various treasures of rich Dogra Culture & heritage. It makes it all the more engrossing, knowledgeable and worth reading. This book showcases the dazzling heritage and culture of Duggar region and is undoubtedly a must read. The writer deserves a huge kudos in his endeavours to highlight the main features of our glorious culture and motivate Dogras to value, follow, practise, preserve, conserve and transmit it to the coming generations. This book has an attractive cover and the book is beautifully printed on high quality paper. It is available both in the library edition and paperback form. Though the library edition is a bit costly as it is multicolour printed with about 100 coloured photographs illuminating our various marks and aspects of Dogra Culture, it is worth buying and I hope, it will serve as a Collector's pride. The layout of this book, the readable font, the pacifying feel and the beautiful photographs make it a unique book for the readers to go through. The glossary appended at the end is useful for those who have little knowledge of Dogri terms & words used in the book. The book also ought to be purchased by the schools, colleges and universities and the students should be encouraged to go through the contents of this book so that they can imbibe, appreciate, preserve and transmit their cultural heritage to the coming generations. Last but not the least, this book gives a good insight to the art lovers, historians, scholars and researchers as it gives a peep into the rich cultural heritage of Duggar and it should serve as a useful compilation in the library of every Dogra ménage. The writer deserves a big adulation for his great work on Duggar.