

## Hindu Epics and the Theme of Duty

“Follow the seasons. Follow your heart. Lead by example. Lead with love, alongside simplicity and courage, embracing duty,” is wise advice from Terri Guillemets, a writer. Wise advice is precisely what motivates many people to accomplish the duties. In Hinduism, a sense of duty is demonstrated in three ancient but cherished stories, “Sibi,” “The Yoga of Knowledge,” and “Ramayana.”

In “Sibi”, a portion of the Mahabharata, a king’s sense of duty is tested by the god, Indra. In Hindu faith, followers place great emphasis on duty on duty or one’s willingness to fulfill obligations and responsibilities even in the face of great sacrifice. As a example, this tale from the spiritual Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, tells of a dove who flies to a king for protection to escape a hungry hawk. However, the hawk is really the god Indra, who intends all along to test the king’s devotion to duty. After passing Indra’s test, the god says, “O king, we put you to a severe test. We challenged your integrity, and we happily accept defeat. In other words, Indra’s admission acknowledges the king’s strong sense of duty and his willingness to honor his duty even in the face of personal sacrifice. By honoring the Hindu dedication to duty, he demonstrated that he was indeed a wise ruler worthy of the title King Sibi. By passing a divine test, King Sibi lives up to the Hindu devotion to duty even if it would have come at personal sacrifice.

In “The Yoga of Knowledge,” Arjuna’s sense of duty is tested by his brother-in-law Krishna. In Hinduism, an India religion, they believe one has to fulfill his/her duties and responsibilities whatever the sacrifice. Arjuna had to face his family in battle. After Arjuna asks for guidance, Krishna says “If you are truly wise, you mourn neither for the living or the dead.”

He is saying, if one is smart, then he or she will do whatever it takes to fulfill their duties. Even if that means killing a family member, people must fulfill their obligations. Krishna reassures Arjuna that he should not mourn the loss of a physical body because even though deceased body is lifeless their soul lives forever. By fighting the battle, Arjuna, fulfilled his duty and responsibility even if it came with making a sacrifice.

In “Ramayana,” a warrior and soon king named Rama endures a violent battle fulfilling his duty as a leader and a husband. Rama charges into battle with Ravana, the evil giant, to save his kidnapped wife. With the help of the monkey god, Hanuman, and his brother Lakshmana, and a huge battle ensues. Rama suddenly turns to the army of Ravana and destroys them. At one point in the battle, the giant Ravana moans, “These gods, instead of supporting me, have gone to the support of this petty human being.” The gods assisted and supported Rama so he could demolish Ravana and reclaim his wife Sita. His enemy, Ravana, resented the gods fulfilling their own duty to Rama. In short, Ravana was very envious and resentful. Furthermore, by fulfilling his duty to his wife, he was praised for his achievement by the gods. In summation, even noble heroes such as the warrior Rama must honor their responsibilities by fulfilling their duties in life.

In these key pieces of Hindu literature, the theme of duty rings loudly through the characters and their brave deeds. In Hindu literature as in life, one often finds oneself face to face with a life challenging ordeal. Despite the uphill battle one often must travel in life, the devotion to duty will always leave one feeling a sense of accomplishment, not matter the outcome.