

The Career of Ram: The Warp and Weft of a Personality Evolution

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Introduction:

The write up on Career of Ram is a narration of the evolution of career path and personal life of Ram. It traces the early life of an individual (Ram), describes explicitly the career choices made by him and captures the experiences arising out of the choices. It provides an opportunity for a professional to reflect on how individual career choices are made or evolve. A deeper reflection leads to a framework to look at the impact and consequences of the decision choices made by an individual in his life span and the motivating factors behind such choices.

The Career Life Cycle of Ram:

The narration provides a profile of Ram, his family background, early education and life in a remote Indian village. It projects Ram as an ambitious person. It describes his character, style and personality, eagerness to migrate and his desire to establish himself as an independent individual. Ram is relentlessly seeking opportunities, actualizes his career growth plan and its stabilization, faces a discontinuity in his career by his own attitude and revives it by his experience.

The narration can be reflected on multiple dimensions, viz. (a) Ram as a person, (b) conceptual aspects related to Ram's career life cycle, (c) reflections on Ram's life and his experiences. There are broadly two influencing factors that shape the character, personality, attitude and actions of Ram as a person. One set of factors is what is inherited by him as a member of a family (Warp), and the other set is what he has acquired by his experiences (Weft) in his career and life.

Ram was born in a village which is culturally strong, in a somewhat orthodox family. He was polio affected. He received abundant affection from his family members

and parents (bordering onto protection). His Polio was treated to the extent possible with no specific anticipated outcome. He struggled to reach school for his studies and managed to accomplish modest education in a village setting.

It is clear that right from the beginning Ram had tremendous perseverance. He was outspoken and opportunity seeking. He was ambitious and wanted to live his life in his own terms.

Ram used his popularity in the village to seek opportunities to move out of the village to explore the world in his own way. He devised a brilliant strategy of accompanying a group of (village)widows on his own terms, who went on a religious pilgrimage. He persuaded his father (through his Uncle) to permit him to leave the village to seek a career of his choice. He not only enlisted the support of his Uncle in obtaining his father's approval, but also received a gift of Rs. 100/- from his Uncle which was considered to be a significant sum at that point of time.

By his own effort, Ram became a stenographer. Any other ordinary individual would have settled in this job until retirement. He would have justified the status to himself for the fact that he has transformed his life from a boy of village origin to a clerical position in a metro city. He would have focused on his family and actively worked towards seeking better opportunities for their next generation.

But, Ram is not an ordinary person to settle down for such a sub-optimal position. He decided to pursue his career and experiment with future growth options. He sought and got a job as a sales person to sell cigarettes. This is an un-conventional job for Ram's Brahminical family background. Ram showed remarkable

adaptability in changing his temperament and working culture. He also changed his hair style and living habits to suit and perform well in the new job.

From selling cigarettes, Ram qualified and became an Accounting professional in a multinational firm in Calcutta by acquiring a Government Diploma in Accountancy (GDA). So far Ram has been successful in his attempts to seek, stabilize and advance his career.

Ram's personal qualities include perseverance, hard working, opportunity seeking, outspoken and possibly an element of personal pride comparing himself favourably with others (whether it was necessary or otherwise).

Over a period of time, accomplishments of Ram gave him (an inflated level of) confidence which made him to specially assess his peers in the multinational organizations somewhat adversely.

Somehow, Ram developed a perception that his colleagues are not necessarily competent (in relative terms). He also felt that he has not been treated equally in the organization, even though there are no tangible evidences to support this.

Based on his perceptions and opinion, Ram decided to quit the current job. No amount of consultation or advice from friends would convince him to stay on with the current position. He felt restless and resigned from the job. In a sense, he rocked the boat, when there was no need to do so without taking into consideration the family responsibility and other considerations. He was unwilling to listen to his own spouse. He acted as per his own wishes in quitting the job.

Ram was super-confident that he will be able to find some other job opportunity for employment as in the past. Unfortunately, at this stage in his life, he was not able to find any suitable opportunity. He had to wait for four years to recalibrate his expectations to be meaningfully employed. He eventually found a job in a lower position, moved to Bombay and actually rebooted his career second time. Of course Ram showed remarkable resilience. He realized the limitations of his personality, educational qualification in the four years of his life without a meaningful occupation and

employment. It was also of the time when the family compulsions and demands were high.

Ram could have easily drifted away and remained as unemployed for the rest of his life. However, he developed the maturity and the pragmatism to accept a job (lower in status than the previous one and located in Bombay) which came on his way albeit after four years of unemployment.

When Ram was doing well, he remembered his Uncle's advice and contributed liberally in financial terms to the welfare of his cousins and other members of his extended family and relatives. Based on the need and subject to his ability, he contributed to the needy to mitigate their difficulties (by running a community kitchen during Bengal Famine).

Reflections on Ram's Career

1. Ram's personality played a dominant role in his career's choices.
2. He disconnected himself from the constraints of the village and set out to seek opportunities in an unfamiliar city (Calcutta).
3. By sheer hard work, adaptability and opportunity seeking, Ram was able to rapidly grow in his professional career.
4. He made the right kind of switches (at the appropriate time) to advance his career. In short, he was thoroughly enjoying the opportunities that came in his life.
5. While outwardly he was very successful, he did nurture a sense of lack of confidence in him and attention seeking attitude. This attitude explains the way he dealt with his colleagues in the multi-national company. Eventually, such strained relationship led to an internal discomfort in him.
6. Purely arising out of his own internal contradiction, Ram quit the job.
7. He was unwilling to listen to any advice or counseling at the most needed time in his life. He made assumptions which are not appropriate in terms of seeking another job. He went through a period of difficulty with patience and perseverance.

8. However, he endured the difficult time, recalibrated himself, found another job and bounced back in his career.
9. In his career, Ram might not have reached the best position, but he salvaged the situation to the best of his ability.
10. His personal attitude led to a serious discontinuity in his carrier. This required a readjustment in his outlook and attitude.
11. He retained the core values of his family like empathy, compassion and willingness to help needy family and community members.
12. Ram was fully accountable to his actions and faced the appropriate consequences. He willingly accepted the consequence of his career option both positive and not-so positive.

Conclusion:

To conclude, it appears a general hypothesis can be made based on the experiences of Ram's career. This basic hypothesis is two broad set of elements contribute and shape the personality, attitude and actions and hence the consequence of individuals.

The first set of elements (Warp) relate to core values inherited by an individual from his parents, members of the family and other close relatives. The second set of elements (Weft) relate to abilities, attitudes and perceptions developed by the individual in his personal and professional life by experiences. Needless to emphasize, without getting into judgmental, these two

elements can be desirable or non-desirable depending on the consequence and impact of the actions of the individual.

It is quite possible that the inherited core values can be moderated by real life experiences. In the other extreme, the inherited core values can be used to reshape the personal and professional life experiences and the shortcomings arising out of it. However, it is very evident that an individual is being swayed by the two set of elements in his (professional and personal) life. He has to be constantly on the alert to ensure that none of these set of elements dominate his choices in personal and professional life which may have an adverse impact.

Those who are lucky are able to make a careful balance and the unlucky one end up making random choices influenced by the dominant behavior of one of these set of elements. A deeper realization and reflection on this would safeguard individuals in making sub-optimal choices in their personal and professional life.

In case of Ram, the core values of empathy, compassion, willingness to help, perseverance, opportunity seeking and attention seeking (and hence a sense of complex) dominated his professional life and contributed to his down fall. The acquired values, habits, experiences of Ram enabled him to bounce back after a brief period of discontinuity.

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