

The epic of gilgamesh and the ramayana



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Epic of Gilgamesh and the Ramayana are two of the oldest epics and examples of heroisms to date. While both Rama and Gilgamesh have many key similarities, there are some distinctive differences between the two. Both of these heroes exhibit the “prototype” characteristics of heroes, such as valor, strength, wisdom, and magnanimity. It’s the origin and cultivation of these characteristics in both Rama and Gilgamesh that is the biggest difference between these heroes. Both of these heroes also embody key values of their respective culture as well. Gilgamesh shows the importance of religion and gender roles, while Rama also shows the importance of religion and family values. The Epic of Gilgamesh, was written in ancient Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization. So, as a result, Gilgamesh, is known to be the first great, or epic, hero in time.

Not only could you say that Gilgamesh is the blueprint, more or less, for the epic hero, but he can also be seen as a symbol of the Mesopotamian culture itself. The Mesopotamians were a polytheistic people, meaning they believed in many Gods. They feared and loved these Gods and did everything in their power to keep them happy, from building temples and making sacrifices to their favorite Gods. So it comes as no surprise that they believed Gilgamesh was 2/3s God and only 1/3 man. The story of Gilgamesh cannot be entirely written off as another myth, he was a real King, and Uruk was a real city. Based on how pious the Mesopotamians where who would they think was better to rule them than a man who was part God? Gilgamesh is also a very strong male character.

Men in ancient Mesopotamia, and in virtually every other civilization thereafter, where expected to be tenacious leaders and providers of their

households. Gilgamesh, was a firm king, maybe too firm in the beginning of his story. Even after his journey with Enkidu, who was again, a male creation of the divine, Gilgamesh is still a strong example of the alpha male prototype during this time. It is said that the epic, Ramayana, has had a deep-rooted influence on Indian life and culture. As a result, its lead character, Rama, embodies many key aspects of Indian culture. Much like Gilgamesh, Rama is also a divine being, since he is the avatar of the God Vishnu. There is some division within Hinduism, some are polytheistic while others are henotheistic or monotheistic, but all believe in purusartha, samsara, and in finding nirvana. While other Gods come to play in different parts of the story, the main one that is mentioned is Vishnu, since the main character is his avatar after all, so it comes to no surprise that many monotheistic Hindus believe in only Vishnu.

Another notable thing about Rama is his constant trust in his dharma and his belief that if he continues to put his trust in his fate he will eventually be lead to nirvana. Throughout the Ramayana, Rama always takes the route that he believes to be his fate, even his banishment. Hierarchy and family respect and harmony are also two major elements of Indian culture. Not only is Rama at the top of the chain, being heir to the throne, and part God, but he is also a superb example of a son and husband. He is wise and always listens to his elders, even if their wishes go against his own. For example, when he is banished he accepts his fate humbly and makes no move to go against his father's will, even after the death of his father. As a husband, he always provides for his wife Sita and does whatever necessary to keep her out of

harm's way, even if it means hunting down the indestructible demon Ravana. He is a shining example for the Indian men to follow.

Rama is accomplished, pious, and wise, all of which are strong virtues in the Indian culture. Both Rama and Gilgamesh are renowned for their divine traits and capabilities such as physical strength, beauty, and nobleness. In both stories, each hero is already in a position of power in their respective societies. The most obvious distinction between the two is their journey to becoming such renowned heroes. Gilgamesh begins as a selfish tyrant, whose oppression over his people is so strong and cruel that they feel the need to turn to the Gods to end his cruelty. It is very easy to mistake him as villain and expect Enkidu to destroy him. Instead, he surprises us all by befriending his enemy. This twist in his story leads him on a path towards wisdom and knowledge, which Gilgamesh eventually acquires, and once he does he is transformed into a valiant and worthy King. It's Gilgamesh's quest that makes him into a hero. In comparison, Rama is wise and well loved by his subjects at the beginning of his story. He already had admirable qualities like valor, chivalry, and humility. He handles his banishment from his own kingdom in an extremely poised manner and decides to trust his Dharma, which just deepens his subjects' devotion and respect for him, in fact, once he is gone his Kingdom starts to suffer and even his brother Bharata didn't want to take the throne from Rama. Rama's innate wisdom and trust in his fate sends him on the mission that ultimately leads to the completion of his destiny.

In Rama's story he proves himself as the hero we already knew him to be which contrasts deeply with Gilgamesh, who has to prove that he even is a

<https://assignbuster.com/the-epic-of-gilgamesh-and-the-ramayana/>

hero. In the end, both heroes have more in common than not. They are both renowned by their societies, and even the rest of the world today. Both Rama and Gilgamesh set the tone for what a hero is, and what a man is in their societies. They both showed the values and potential dangers of their religions. Both The Epic of Gilgamesh and the Ramayana teach many lessons that many societies and cultures around the world can and do learn from..