



The concept of Ramrajya and its contemporary relevance

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Abstract:

The ideal of Ramrajya as conceived in Ramayana is still relevant. In Indian thought, the institution of king is an ethical institution, who himself has to maintain high moral standard and be a model to his subjects. The ideals of kingship are summed up in the concept of Ramrajya in which none injures another and the king himself is but the regent of righteousness and truth. It can be said Ram personifies all the ideals of dharma as underlined in Indian tradition and is rightly called as Maryada Purushottam, as he upheld and followed all the norms expected of an ideal man. According to F.H. Hardy, "Ram ruled his kingdom as the epitome, or embodiment of righteousness. . However, despite the advance of civilization and progress in science and technology and efforts through international forums like the United Nations to achieve peace and happiness, the world is riddled with strife, misery and tension.

Key words: Ramrajya, Republic, Agni Pariksha, Ayodhya Kandam

Description

The ideal of Ramrajya as conceived in Ramayana is still relevant. It is still conceived as the ideal form of government. Plato had also envisaged ideal state in *Republic*. Plato's ideal state is ruled by an ideal king, designated as Philosopher King by Plato. Philosopher King is embodiment of wisdom and virtues. Citing the need of Philosophers acquiring the power of king for the welfare of humanity, Plato says, "Unless it happen that Philosophers acquire the kingly power in states, or that those who are now called kings and potentates be imbued with a sufficient measure of genuine philosophy, that is to say, unless political power and philosophy be united in the same

person... there will be no deliverance for cities nor yet for the human race."¹

In Indian thought, the institution of king is an ethical institution, who himself has to maintain high moral standard and be a model to his subjects. According to Satpath Brahman, the king was considered as "the upholder of the sacred law"².

In Mahabharata it is said the favorable natural phenomena are linked to ethical rule. "If king ruled according to Dharma, then the subject would enjoy happiness and even the course of seasonal a natural phenomena (rain, good crops, the health of the people ...) which all depend upon cosmic Dharma, would follow a normal and good course."³



According to Artha Shastra, "it is on the science of the government that the course of the progress of the world depends".⁴

In Ramayana, Maharishi Valmiki conceived the idea of an Ideal state (Ramrajya), which is still an ideal for the people of India. In the conception of Ramrajya the state is ruled by an ideal king in the form of Ram, who is embodiment of all the virtues. According to Prof. V. Raghavan, "in Ram reign (Ramrajya) there was no wailing of widowed women, no fear of disease, thief or other calamities, elders did not have to perform the obsequies of the younger ones, everyone was righteous, and thinking always of Ram, refrained from injuring another, rains fall in proper times, vegetation put forth its fruits in season and out of season, and everyone was satisfied with his duties, the classes were contended and free from avarice."⁵

It is based on the principles of Dharma –righteousness and moral values, which can become a guiding spirit for administration in modern times.

An ideal king is very sensitive towards public opinion. In Ram this sensitivity reached an extreme, when he renounced his pregnant wife bowing to public opinion even after *Agni Pariksha*, though he himself was convinced of her purity. Though this act of Shri Ram had put a question mark on his conduct towards his wife but his sensitivity towards public opinion makes him an ideal king. Moreover, this incident reflects whenever there is a conflict

between the duty of a king and duties towards any other relations be it towards wife, children, brother, parents etc, an ideal king chooses the duties of a king. He sacrifices his conveniences and pleasures to fulfill the wishes of his subject.

In the words of Prof. V. Raghavan, "The ideals of kingship are summed up in the concept of Ramrajya in which none injures another and the king himself is but the regent of righteousness and truth."⁶

Eulogizing the qualities of Ram it is said, in Ayodhya Kadam: "He is benevolent, winner of anger and devoted to learned. He understand the subtlety of dharma, controller of senses and pure from both outside and inside."⁷ Again, underlying the ideal character of Ram, it is held in Ayodhya Kadam of Valmiki Ramayan as: "In forbearance he was like the Earth, in intelligence like Vrishaspati, and in prowess like Indra."⁸

In Agni Purana, King is compared with the qualities of a pregnant mother: "King is expected to do good, to sacrifice for the people. Like a pregnant mother giving up all pleasures for the sake of her unborn child, so the king must sacrifice his conveniences, inclinations and pleasures, in order to provide the greatest help and service to his subjects."⁹

About Ram love and concerns for the people of state, King Dashratha says, "when he victoriously returns from the fight, either on elephant or on horseback, he never forgets in his



triumph to enquire affectionately about the welfare of the people whom he meets in his way. He questions them, as one would do his sons, everything concerning their children, wives, servants, pupils and the sacrificial fire. He rejoices in the joy of the people and becomes sad in their sufferings as their fathers have been."¹⁰

According to Kant, ethics is doing to others what one would like to be done to himself. Like Kant, Daksha declares, "One who desires happiness should look upon another just as he looks upon himself." According to Devala, "The quintessence of dharma is that one should not do to others what would be disliked by one's self.

In Ramayana, we see Ram personifies all the virtues, he expect in his subjects. He is an ideal son, ideal brother, ideal friend, ideal warrior, ideal king, ideal master with some qualification ideal husband. In the words of Prof. V. Raghavan, Ramayana, "illustrates ideals which ought to prevail in personal, domestic, social and public life, ideals of brotherhood, friendship, kingship, and above all, ideals of chastity on the part of women and sexual morality, on the part of men."¹¹

Praising his ideal nature, the subject of Ayodhya says about Ram as, "He is virtuous, true to his vows and free from envy. He is forgiving, gentle, of sweet speech, and of grateful mind."¹²

Dharma (Righteousness) is identified with Satya (Truth). In Brihadaranyaka Upanishada it is

declared, "Righteousness is truth. Therefore it is said a man who speaks the truth speaks righteousness, or a man who speaks righteousness speaks the truth, both these are the same thing."¹³

According to Swami Prabhavananda, "Ram is embodiment of all the virtues, but especially of truthfulness-both in its primary sense and in the sense of faithfulness to the given word. It is for the sake of truth that he loses his kingdom. His father had promised rashly, but the promise had nevertheless to be kept. This extreme devotion to truth is to be understood in the light of characteristics Hindu belief that it is this quality by which God himself is chiefly known."¹⁴

In the words of Maharishi Valmiki, " Ram is Satyavadin, fully committed to Satya and Satpurusha. Shri Ram has established Artha and Dharama."¹⁵

Again praising the truthful nature of Ram, the subjects of Ayodhya says." He is truthful and winner of senses."¹⁶

In the Apastamba Dharma Sutra approved from of conduct mentioned is speaking truth, moderation in eating, refraining from exposing others weak points, freedom from jealousy, sharing one's good with others, friendliness with all beings, absence of cruelty, contentment.¹⁷

According to Gautam Dharma Sutra, The principles of dharma are: compassion towards all beings, forbearance, absence of jealousy, purity,



moderation, auspiciousness, dignified conduct of one's self and freedom from avarice.¹⁸

Ram embodies all such qualities. According to Valmiki Ramayana, " Ram is knower of dharma, truthful, virtuous, peaceful, does not see fault of others, victor of senses, soft natured and benevolent to all".¹⁹ Kaikeyi gently recounted the accomplishments of Ram as: "... darling Ram is virtuous, accomplished, well-educated, truthful, grateful and of pure character. He is the eldest son of the king, and the kingdom belongs to him. Long lived Ram will minister to the welfare of his brothers and of the people with parental care."²⁰

Underlying this ethical nature, it is said in Valmiki Ramayana: Ram was peerless on earth.²¹ In the magnanimity of his heart he would forget hundreds of evils done to him but would gratefully remember even the single act of kindness shown to him.²² He was valiant, candid and the source of all good.²³

If king rules unjustly and does not follow dharma his subject would follow numerous evils. In Mahabharata it is said: "The king who act according to the counsel of corrupted and sinful ministers becomes a destroyer of Dharma and deserves to be killed by his subjects. The king who fails to discharge the duties of statecraft meets the same fate of destruction."²⁴

Properly administered punishment helps in propagation of dharma. According to Artha Shastra,

"Punishment when awarded with due consideration, makes the people devoted to righteousness (Dharma) to works productive of wealth (Artha) and enjoyment (Kama)."²⁵

About Ram, Valmiki Ramanaya says: He never indulges in wrong deed and give strong arguments in favour of justice.²⁶ Following the path of strict justice, he never shrinks from passing death sentence to those who deserve it, but he never oppresses the innocent, rather rewards them profusely.²⁷ He punished and rewarded the people according to the strict rules of justice.²⁸ He was friend of the poor, chestier of the wicked, and well-versed in religion and social customs and laws.²⁹ In spite of his being powerful, he is not haughty.³⁰

According to author of Dharma Sutras and Smritis an ideal king is to maintain provision for welfare and public works:

The physical and mental handicap, the old, the student, unmarried girls were exempted from taxes.³¹ The king was expected to support economically needy student members of royal family, court eunuch and madmen.³² King had to support orphans, widows, sick people, pregnant women in need of medicinal help.³³

Ram was deeply concerned for the welfare of his subject. It is said: Ram ministered to be welfare of his subjects, and the people too were deeply fond of him.³⁴ He never sought, pleasure of the cost of morality.³⁵ He never tells a lie and respectful to elders. There is



relation of mutual love between Shri Ram and the subjects.³⁶

Thus, it can be said Ram personifies all the ideals of dharma as underlined in Indian tradition and is rightly called as *Maryada Purshottam*, as he upheld and followed all the norms expected of an ideal man. According to F.H. Hardy, "Ram ruled his kingdom as the epitome, or embodiment of righteousness. He is envisaged as the ideal king."³⁷

The message of *Rāmāyana* has a contemporary relevance in giving light to modern man in administration. The professed objective of all governments, down the corridors of history of man, has been to provide and ensure the welfare and happiness of the people through an efficient and good administration. However, despite the advance of civilization and progress in science and technology and efforts through international forums like the United Nations to achieve peace and happiness, the world is riddled with strife, misery and tension.

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³Mahabharata, III, 207.

⁴Artha Shastra, I, 4

⁴ V. Raghavan : *The Ramayana {The Religion of the Hindus Ed. by Kenneth W.Morgan (The Ronald press company, New York, 1953)}* p.351.

⁶V. Raghavan, op cit. p.272

⁷Ayodhya Kandam, I,15

⁸Ayodhya Kandam, I, 39

⁹Agni Purana, 222, 8

¹⁰Ayodhya Kandam, II, 39-40

¹¹V. Raghavan, op cit. p.272

¹²Ayodhya Kandam, II, 31-32

¹³Brihadaranyaka Upanishada I, 4-14

¹⁴Swami Prabhavananda : *The Spiritual Heritage of India (Sri Ramkrishna Math, Madras, 1981)* p. 86

¹⁵Ayodhya Kandam, II, 29

¹⁶Ayodhya Kandam, II, 41

¹⁷Apastamba Dharma Sutra, VIII-I

¹⁸Gautam Dharma Sutra, VIII

¹⁹Ayodhya Kandam, II, 31-32

²⁰Ayodhya Kandam, VIII, 14-15

²¹ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 8

²² Ayodhya Kandam, I, 11

²³ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 22

²⁴ Mahabharata, XII, 9,3,9-10

²⁵ Artha Shastra, 5-6

²⁶ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 17

²⁷ Ayodhya Kandam, II, 47

²⁸ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 25-26

²⁹ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 15-16

³⁰ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 13

³¹ Vashista Dharma Sutra, I, 42-46

³² Vashista Dharma Sutra, XIX, 23

³³ Mahabharata, I, 49,11

³⁴ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 14

³⁵ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 27

³⁶ Ayodhya Kandam, I, 14

³⁷ Encyclopedia Encarta