

The vision of Ramrajya and its reflection in Modern Indian Constitutional Governance

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यही आग सरयू के तट पर दशरथ जी के राजमहल में
घन समूह में हल चपला सी प्रकट हुई प्रज्वलित हुई थी
शक्ति मन-मन, त्रसित विपर, आकुल मुनिवरगण
बोल रही अधर्म की तूती, दुस्तर हुआ धर्म का पालन
तब देश की रक्षार्थ देश का सोया क्षत्रित्व जागा था
रामरूप में प्रकट हुई यह ज्वालाजिसने असुर जलाये, देश बचाया

(There was a rising once due to the misappropriation of system in king Dasharatha's kingdom. Unethical environment prevailed. Then came Rama, epitome of protection, who not only saved the land from evil spirits but also established ideal system.)

Abstract

Ram-Rajya means an ideal state. The concept of Ram-Rajya includes all the ideals of welfare of the people and the state. Protection of nature, protection of animals and birds, protection of rivers, protection of mountains, protection of living creatures, protection of all vegetation, protection of all living beings, their happiness, and their welfare is assured in Ram-Rajya. How should the life of an ideal king be, all these things are included in Ram-Rajya. Rama Rajya, a vision popularized by Valmiki and further shared by Tulsidas in the renowned Ramcharit Manas, is a humanistic vision that is centred on the values of virtue, peace, and harmony. Tulsidas describes Rama Rajya as a state that eliminates and eradicates physical, spiritual, and bodily suffering, which will lead to peaceful living and will be in adherence to laws and ethics. Apart from that, it also promotes truth, purity, compassion, and charity, ensuring that no sin is committed even subconsciously. In 1929, Gandhi reflected on Ram-Rajya in his book 'Young India, and saw it as a politically organized society that upholds righteousness and brings happiness to all ages and social classes, including the living environment. He envisioned Ram-Rajya to be an ideal democracy where even the poorest and marginalized could expect right and fair justice. In today's world, companies practice Rama Rajya, led by spirituality and governed by divine and democratic leaders, which minimizes conflicts and egos, ultimately enhancing teamwork and collaboration. This philosophy emphasizes the importance of divine-

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democratic leaders ranging from authoritarian to democratic within the society, politics, and businesses, the type of idea, thus resonates Rama Rajya being Divine-Democracy.

Keywords: Ram-Rajya, Dharma, Good Governance, Indian Constitution, Mahatma Gandhi, Justice and Morality, Ethical Leadership, Spirituality and Society

Introduction

The premise of Ram-Rajya is an obsolete vision that was first articulated by Valmiki in his great Sanskrit epic, the Ramayana. In the mediaeval period, Tulsidas further elaborates and popularises this vision in his work, Ramcharit Manas. In the modern contemporary times, Mahatma Gandhi reinterpreted it as a universal vision for human society. Valmiki describes Ram-Rajya, as a realm where all individuals possessed remarkable virtues and qualities, actively engaging in righteous conduct. Even the flora and fauna flourished with fruits and flowers, unaffected by any damage caused by pests and insects. The clouds rained in a timely manner, and the breeze was refreshing. All beings experienced satisfaction. Inspired by Rama, all beings refrained from inflicting harm on one another and was focused on cultivating virtues (Valmiki, n.d., trans. Griffith).

Tulsi Das emphasizes that in Ram-Rajya, individuals do not suffer from physical, spiritual, or emotional distress. Every individual coexists in harmony, demonstrating mutual love and understanding while also fulfilling their respective duties as outlined in the sacred texts. Hence it is widely believed that in our present age, we ought to strive for this ideal.

The four fundamental principles of the Dharma, namely Truth, Purity, Compassion, and Charity, are embodied, preventing any individual from engaging in sinful actions, even unconsciously. Every one partakes in the practice of Bhakti towards Rama, thereby securing the privilege of achieving Moksha, which represents liberation from the perpetual cycle of reincarnation. In this context, the term "Rama" may not signify the king of Ayodhya, but rather the concept of Nirguna Ram as expressed by Kabir.

There were many independent kingdoms in India during the Ramayana period such as Kashi, Mithila, Koshal, Kaikeya, Saurashtra, Vishala, Anga, and Magadha, and land between the central Himalayas, and the Vindhya Mountain was Aryavarta. The form of government prevalent at the time of Ramrajya can be called a Limited Monarchy. The king's position was completely conventional, yet the new ruler was proposed by the current king and cabinet and

chosen by the assembly. Before Sri Rama was made the crown prince, King Dasharatha had taken approval of his assembly from all the ministers. The king was completely engrossed in governance.

The epic Ramayana serves as a historical archive of social and moral principles that are still relevant in the Hindu community today. It tells the story of the heroic warrior-prince Rama and his teachings and achievements. Although the epic has undergone countless alterations, modifications, vernacular and local translations, the themes have remained central to Hindu philosophy and tradition; they continue to be a source of inspiration for literature, dance, art, and moral education. In the Hindu religion, Rama is revered as the model of social and moral conduct, and upholding societal standards (Balkaran & Dorn, 2012).

In the Ramayana, Lord Rama is portrayed as an ideal king who embodies righteousness, justice, and compassion. His character and actions provide guidance on how good governance should be practised. Rama's character is built on unwavering integrity and adherence to dharma (righteousness). He always upholds truth, keeps his promises, and maintains ethical conduct. Good governance is essential for promoting social advancement, economic development, and political stability. It ensures that power is used responsibly and, in the people's, best interests. Good governance promotes the well-being and prosperity of societies and organizations by promoting transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, effectiveness, efficiency, and ethical behaviour (Rai, 2018). The text also emphasizes the value of diversity and respect for different beings and perspectives. The Ramayana highlights the significance of non-violence and compassion as essential elements for sustainable peace. Rama, as the king, is accountable to his people. Rama's rule promotes transparency in governance. Decision-making processes are transparent and efficient institutions and systems are established to ensure effective governance (Rai, 2018).

Research Questions and Methodology

This paper aims to explore the following questions:

1. What the main ideas behind Ramrajya are as described in the Ramayana and by thinkers like Tulsidas and Mahatma Gandhi?
2. How do these ideas match or differ from the values and principles in the Indian Constitution?
3. Can Ramrajya be used as a model for good governance today? If yes, then how?

To answer these questions, the paper uses a comparative and interpretative method. It looks at verses from the Ramayana and connects them with parts of the Indian Constitution. It also refers to Gandhi's writings and other scholars' views. The focus is on understanding and explaining the meaning and message behind Ramrajya, and how it can guide modern leadership and governance.

Ram-Rajya and the Modern Indian Governance and Constitution

In the Baal Kaand of the Ramayana, King Dasharatha, the ruler of Ayodhya, is shown as a responsible and wise monarch. His decision to crown his son, Lord Rama, was not just a familial matter but an important state decision, reflecting the king's role in governance. Dasharatha's ministers played a vital role in assisting him, managing the affairs of the kingdom, and ensuring the well-being of the state. A pivotal moment occurs when Dasharatha says: "I will make my son, Rama, the king, for he is virtuous and capable. I will appoint him to ensure justice and righteousness prevails in the kingdom." (Ramayana, Baal Kaand, 1.33) (Valmiki, 1952, Baal Kaand, Ch. 33, V. 1)

In the modern Indian context, Dasharatha's role can be likened to the head of the state—the Prime Minister—while his ministers are similar to the various ministries in the Cabinet of India. Like Dasharatha, who had several ministers in his court (e.g., Vasishta, the royal priest, and others), today's ministers serve in various capacities, ensuring governance runs smoothly.

In the Constitution of India, the President of India is the head of the state, but the actual governance is carried out by the Council of Ministers led by the Prime Minister, as outlined in Article 74: "There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions."

This corresponds to Dasharatha's decision to consult his council of ministers before making major decisions, such as the crowning of Rama. In a similar way, Dasharatha's duty to listen to his advisors' mirrors Article 77 of the Indian Constitution, which states: "All executive actions of the Government of India shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the President."

While the President's name is invoked, the actual decision-making power lies with the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers, which is similar to Dasharatha's rule, where the king's decisions were influenced by the advice of his ministers.

A key theme in the Ramayana is Dasharatha's commitment to the welfare of his subjects and the adherence to Dharma (righteousness). When Dasharatha is forced by his wife Kaikeyi's

demand for Rama's exile, he laments: "Even though it hurts me deeply, I cannot go against the promise I made to Kaikeyi, as I must uphold my duty and my word." (Ramayana, Baal Kaand, 1.44) (Valmiki, 1952, Baal Kaand, Ch. 44, V. 1).

This reflects a commitment to justice, even at great personal cost. The Indian Constitution similarly places great emphasis on justice, under Article 14, which states: "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India."

This concept of justice and fairness echoes Dasharatha's sense of duty. Even though Dasharatha was compelled to take actions that caused personal sorrow, his decision was based on the principle of Dharma—a guiding principle in governance.

In the Ramayana, Dasharatha was not alone in his decision-making. He had a royal council comprising of learned individuals such as Rishi Vasishtha, who played the role of an advisor. This mirrors the current role of advisory bodies in India, such as the Planning Commission (now replaced by NITI Aayog). Dasharatha's constant consultation with Vasishtha is a metaphor of how the government in modern India consults experts in various fields.

This concept aligns with Article 57 of the Indian Constitution, which provides for the establishment of advisory bodies that advise the government on various matters: "The President may appoint a body to assist and advise in the formulation of policies."

In the end, Dasharatha's governance in the Ramayana is a model of justice, advice, and adherence to duty, aligning with many principles found in the Indian Constitution. Just as Dasharatha maintained a system of checks and balances through his council, modern India's governance is based on similar principles of collaboration and fairness outlined in the Constitution. Both systems reflect a commitment to justice (Dharma) and the welfare of the people, even in the face of personal hardship or sacrifice.

Through the story of Dasharatha, the Ramayana offers timeless lessons on leadership, governance, and the importance of following one's duty, much like the structure and spirit of governance enshrined in the Constitution of India.

In the Ramayana, Lord Rama often teaches Lakshmana about duty (Dharma) and the importance of adhering to it, no matter the personal cost. One of the key lessons comes during their exile when Rama explains the importance of abiding by one's duties as a ruler, brother, and son. "Dharma is that which ensures the well-being of the people. As a king, it is your

responsibility to uphold justice, even if it brings personal grief." (Ramayana, Ayodhya Kaand, 2.51) (Valmiki, 1952, Ayodhya Kaand, Ch. 51, V. 2).

This can be linked to Article 51A of the Indian Constitution, which emphasizes the duty of every citizen to abide by the Constitution and contribute to the well-being of society. "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions." Rama's words to Lakshmana mirror the principle that leaders, like public officials in modern India, must prioritize justice and the welfare of the people, above personal desires.

After Sugriva is made the king of Kishkindha, Rama advises him on the importance of trust, cooperation, and honesty in leadership. He tells Sugriva to be steadfast and not betray those who are loyal to him. "A ruler must be trustworthy and just. Trust is the foundation of any good governance. Betraying it will lead to destruction." (Ramayana, Kishkindha Kaand, 4.14) (Valmiki, 1952, Kishkindha Kaand, Ch. 14, V. 4).

In modern Indian governance, this advice is connected to the idea of transparency and accountability in leadership. The Right to Information Act (RTI), which was passed in 2005, reflects this lesson of transparency in governance. "Every citizen has the right to access information under the control of public authorities."

This aligns with Rama's principle that a king, or any modern leader, must be transparent and trustworthy, ensuring that people can hold the leadership accountable.

When Rama speaks to Bali, who had wronged Sugriva, he discusses the nature of power and its responsibility. Rama tells Bali that power must not be used for personal gain or to oppress others, but to serve the people and uphold justice. "Power without righteousness leads to arrogance and destruction. True power lies in using one's authority for the greater good of the people, not for selfish purposes." (Ramayana, Kishkindha Kaand, 4.29) (Valmiki, 1952, Kishkindha Kaand, Ch. 29, V. 4).

This lesson can be connected to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty to every citizen: "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law."

Rama's words to Bali remind us that leadership must be grounded in the principles of justice, fairness, and respect for human rights, ensuring that power is never misused.

Rama's reverence for duty and law is also evident when he honors his father's vow to send him into exile, even though it causes him personal suffering. He does not challenge the law or the word of his father, illustrating the importance of respecting legal commitments and the rule of law. "I must follow the law and my father's words, for the law must be upheld at all costs." (Ramayana, Ayodhya Kaand, 2.40) (Valmiki, 1952, Ayodhya Kaand, Ch. 40, V. 2).

This is directly aligned with the Indian Constitution's Preamble, which sets the foundation for justice, equality, and the rule of law in India: "We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic... securing to all its citizens justice, social, economic, and political."

In the Uttar Kaand, Lord Rama returns to rule the kingdom after his exile. Despite personal suffering and hardships, his primary focus is the welfare and happiness of his subjects. He displays a deep sense of responsibility for his kingdom and prioritizes the well-being of the citizens, not merely personal or royal comfort. "Kingdoms prosper when a ruler protects the subjects and ensures their peace and prosperity." (Ramayana, Uttar Kaand, 1.84) Valmiki, 1952, Uttar Kaand, Ch. 84, V. 1).

This is similar to the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution, specifically Articles 38 and 39, which focus on promoting the welfare of the people and ensuring social and economic justice. Leaders are encouraged to work toward the good of all citizens, especially the marginalized. "The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic, and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life."

Lord Rama's adherence to his moral and ethical principles, particularly regarding the treatment of Sita, highlights his commitment to justice and constitutional morality. He undergoes great personal suffering, but he chooses the path that ensures the kingdom's moral integrity, ensuring the ethical principles remain intact, even when tested. "Duty to the people and the kingdom must always take precedence, even over personal emotions." (Ramayana, Uttar Kaand, 3.66) (Valmiki, 1952, Ayodhya Kaand, Ch. 66, V. 3).

This reflects the idea of Constitutional Morality as outlined in the Indian Constitution, where public officials must act with integrity, uphold the law, and protect the dignity of individuals, even when faced with difficult or unpopular decisions. "It is the duty of the government to act

in a manner that is consistent with the Constitution, and in doing so, uphold the highest standards of fairness, equality, and justice."

Mahatma Gandhi's 'Ramrajya'

Playing a significant role in India's fight for independence, Mahatma Gandhi shaped a course that reflected the ideals of Ramrajya coexisting within the framework of modern India. In an article published in 'Young India' on September 19, 1929 (Gandhi, 1926, p. 76), Mahatma Gandhi shared his vision of the concept of "Ram Raj," which he described as the kingdom of God. He emphasised his belief in no deity other than the singular God of Truth and righteousness (Bose, 1957, p. 254). Regardless of the historical existence of the character of Rama, the ancient narrative of the Ramayana incorporated a true form of democracy, where even the humblest citizen could expect prompt and fair justice without the burdens of elaborate legal procedures. The ethical principle of nonviolence (Ahimsa) lies at the heart of both philosophies, with emphasis on peaceful means of dispute resolution above physical ones. Gandhi said that leaders should take the role of servants and helpers of the disadvantaged, just as the monarch in 'Ramrajya' safeguard the welfare of every subject.

Gandhi's Ramarajya was a secular one rather than a religious one. By integrating Ramarajya with several concepts Gandhi tries to make the concept of Ramarajya appeal to everyone. Gandhi was conscious that India is a heterogeneous country and has inter-caste and inter-religious problems. According to Gandhi, 'Truth is God' and every religion worship 'Truth.' To appeal to other religions Gandhi used several terms to refer to Ramarajya. For Muslims he used 'Khudai Raj,' for Christians 'Kingdom of God' and beyond all religions he used the term 'Dharmarajya (Gandhi, 1933, p. 116).' He mentions 'if the word Ramarajya offends any one, then I shall call it "Dharmarajya".' Gandhi's concept of Hinduism is totally different from the traditional one. He wants to remould Hinduism through "de-Brahminization" and "de-intellectualization. (Gandhi, 1930, March 20)"

Gandhi regarded Poorna Swaraj as a first step towards bringing Ram-Rajya to life. He wrote Hind Swaraj which was also an effort towards achieving the later objective of Poorna Swaraj. This demonstrates the origin of idea that existed and developed as he reached the ground zero. His proposition was a good society which was more accomplished with spiritual prosperity.

Former Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee felt during his rule that India was in a disturbed state along with troubles from neighbouring countries. He wrote in the language

which his political role did not permit him to express openly publicly. His idea of Ramraj was an all-inclusive state which stands above party politics. He has varied concept of good governance starting from Raj Dharma. He states in his work-

राजपथ पर भीड़, जनपथ पड़ा सूना
पलटनो का मार्च, होता शोर दूना
शोर में डूबा हुआ स्वाधीनता का स्वर
रुद्ध वाणी, लेखनी जड़, कसमसाता उर.

(The Kings celebrate while the common people suffer. Rulers rule by force and try to subdue the right to freedom. No one is allowed to speak freely, there are restrictions on pen and the hearts are suffocated.)

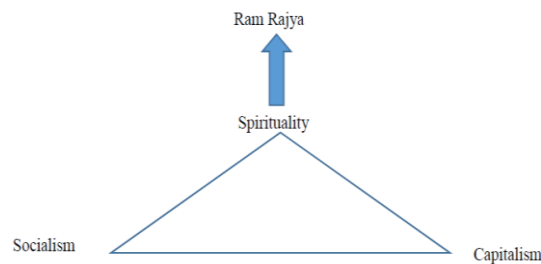
Ram-Rajya in Contemporary Times

In contemporary context there are three worldviews as three visions of human society.

Economistic worldview prioritizes the Market and asserts that individual behaviour is driven by Profit, Competition and Self-interest. This viewpoint emphasizes Prosperity, GDP, and other economic indicators. It portrays a Transactional understanding of individuals and human society. (Sharma, 2020, March)

The Humanist – Materialist perspective places society on forefront and is driven by Justice, Rights and Duties. The view centres on concepts of Justice, Rights and Duties, reflecting a Transformational view of human society and individuals.

The transcendentalist worldview focuses on Spirituality and Higher Purpose of Existence. Its primary focus is on Self, according to this worldview human behaviour is driven by Love, Compassion and Devotion. The ultimate goal is to foster Peace within society, representing a Transcendental view of human society and individuals.

Figure 1: Sacred-Civic Model of Ramrajya

Source: By author.

Ram Rajya as Sacred-Civic Society (sacro-civic)

The term ‘Ram’ signifies the sacred dimension, while ‘Rajya’ denotes the civic dimension. Consequently, Ram Rajya represents sacro-civic vision of human society. It fundamentally represents a blend of Sattava and Rajas in human actions and decision-making processes. Ram Rajya reflects the mindset and thought- Action on the part of Leaders. Thus, representing a Sattavik leadership model.

In Corporate context, Ram Rajya signifies spiritually motivated corporations- Corporations those guided by a higher order of purpose and Divine- Democratic leadership. This approach fosters increased synergy and diminishes conflicts and interpersonal egos that generate negative energy. Therefore, Ram Rajya holds significant implications for Corporations by emphasizing Prosperity (Profit), Justice (Equity) and Peace (Workplace harmony). It advocates the necessity of the divine-democratic leadership across in society, politics, and corporations environment.

Orchha, a small town situated on the banks of river Betwa in Bundelkhand, is a place of historical significance. It is known for its majestic Ram temple, chariot and chhatris. It was founded by the Bundelrajput ruler Rudra Pratap Singh and eventually captured by the Mughal king Akbar. It boasts of being a kingdom which was rule by lord Rama. The Ram Raja temple or the Orchha temple, is the only temple where lord Rama is worshipped as a king. A guard of honour is held every day, policemen designated as guards watch over the palace and armed salutation is provided to God Rama every day. Hence, Orchha is also known as ‘Ram Raja Sarkar.’ It is believed that a famous bhajan of Gandhi has linkage with the city – *Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram, Patit Pavan Sita Ram, Ishwar Allah tero Naam, sabhko sanmati de Bhagwan*, this implies that the state government should work for the betterment of its subjects. It is based on the concept of good governance.

Conclusion

Ramrajya offers a timeless blueprint for governance rooted in compassion, justice, and accountability—principles that perfectly align with India's constitutional values. Imagine a nation where justice is swift, corruption is a distant memory, and every citizen thrives with dignity and security. The ideals of Ramrajya emphasize leadership by example, where rulers are disciplined, honest, and deeply committed to public welfare. By drawing from these ancient yet relevant teachings, India can craft a governance model that strengthens democracy, upholds constitutional ideals, and transforms the country into a beacon of fairness and prosperity. Bridging the wisdom of tradition with the aspirations of modernity, Ramrajya is not just a dream—it's a roadmap to an India that leads the world by example. There have always been debate and speculation regarding the nature of an ideal state. Plato talked in *Republic* about his 'Ideal State,' with a "philosopher king". He further said that 'this Ideal State is, therefore, not unreal, but the only real State, and its reality is the ground of existence of all actually existent States' (Stace, 1920, p. 225). Similarly Karl Marx also talked about ideal society and is of the view that political practice is fundamentally grounded in moral principles that can never be abandoned. Same way, Gandhi talked about *Rama Rajya* as an 'ideal society' and shows how this ideal could be a pole star and a guiding light to strive for. If we continue towards the building such a society, to some extent it is bound to be realized and to that extant people will benefit by it.

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