
RAM-RAJYA REIMAGINED- EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS IN MODERN BHARTIYA GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

Ram Rajya, an idea promulgated by Goswami Tulsidas ji envisions a society having the sense of equality, righteousness and harmony. The Ramcharitmanas, is a cornerstone of religious and cultural life, offers a detailed portrayal of ideal society i.e. Ram-Rajya.. The aim of this study is to integrate the concepts such as, lord Rama's interaction with Nishad Raaj, Shabari and the government's initiative of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'. An analysis of western ideal state and Ram-Rajya will also be conducted. The paper tries to fill a significant gap by offering a unique comparative perspective that bridges the traditional ethical frameworks of the 'Ramcharitmanas' with contemporary policy analysis.

KEYWORDS: Ram Rajya, Governance, policies, equality, inclusiveness, initiative, government.

INTRODUCTION

The essence of Ram Rajya lies in the universal inclusiveness, where every individual regardless of caste, creed or social standing, enjoys equal rights and opportunities. This concept of Ram Rajya has become a powerful metaphor in the political discourse of India, often invoked by the leaders and the thinkers to articulate the goal of good governance. In contemporary times, the ideals of Ram-Rajya have found resonance in the policies and rhetoric of the Indian government, particularly in its efforts to address historical inequalities and promote inclusivity across all the sections of the society. The present government's emphasis on social justice, empowerment of the marginalised, and inclusive development reflects an attempt to align with the timeless values espoused in the ideal of Ram-Rajya.

We have encountered multiple times that the present government lays ample stress on promoting the ideology of Shri Rama. Ram has always remained an ideal in the hearts of Indians and many other countries. The Maryada Purushottam Rama showed the world how a king should act as a father and dedicate himself to his people's welfare and progress. The kingdom of Ayodhya during the times of Lord Rama was highly prosperous as Shri Rama never treated anyone as inferior or did any injustice to any individual. Equality is not just equal treatment in society, it should encompass both formal equality; which is equal treatment under the law and substantive equality; which is equal opportunities. Though there are different ideas of an ideal state in the world, Ram Rajya is incomparable. Therefore the paper focuses on combining these concepts and bridging a gap between ancient wisdom and present government. Moreover, by juxtaposing the ideals of Ram Rajya with the present government this paper seems to contribute to the broader discourse on governance, social justice and national development. The ultimate goal of this research is to highlight the enduring significance of these ideals in shaping a more just, inclusive and harmonious society in today's democratic framework.

1.1 Research Gap

While the ideals of Ram Rajya are often discussed, there is limited scholarly work on how these ideals were or could be operationalised in a modern governance structure. The doctrine of ideal state is given by many philosophers in the west and a comparative study of India's Ram Rajya and west's Platorism, has not been carried out deliberately. Similarly, the extent to which the Indian government has operationalised equality and inclusiveness in its policies and programs has also been less explored.

1.2. Research Question

- To what extent have the principles of equality and Inclusiveness been incorporated into the policies and practices of the present government.
- What evidence exists to suggest Ram Rajya was a truly inclusive society, accommodating diverse social groups.
- How Ram Rajya's principles are more suitable for implementation than Platonism theory of ideal state.

METHODOLOGY

The review of literature is carried out with secondary data and ancient text Ramcharitmanas.

A close reading of the text is carried out to identify verses and episodes that address the themes of paper. This will include both literal and interpretative analysis to understand the underlying message of Goswami Tulsidas. Platonism theory of the ideal state from the west will be compared with the Ram Rajya for understanding its applicability in a better manner. The ideals identified in the text will be compared with the contemporary policies of the Indian government. Government documents, policy papers, press releases will be analysed to understand the emphasis on inclusiveness and equality. The use of hermeneutics is made for drawing the parallels between the epic's narrative and contemporary governance system.

Ram-Rajya's Idea of Equipoise and Inclusivity

The idea of 'समानता' always lies in the roots of Hinduism. Right from the Vedas, Puranas, till the Ramcharitmanas only the storyline changed but the inherent message always remained intact and same. Hindu Dharma taught the world to see the 'ब्रह्म तत्त्व' in everything around us, not just humans, but even nature and all other small or large creatures have a soul which represents the supreme lord. Our scriptures instilled in us the ideology of equality within the community as well as with our surroundings as the creator of everything is believed to be one, that ultimate divine force.

Ram Rajya as envisioned in the Ramcharitmanas represents the epitome of an ideal society governed by righteousness. This concept transcends mere governance, it embodies the spiritual, social and ethical ideals that ensure the well being of every individual within the society. At the heart of Ram Rajya lies the belief in the innate dignity and equality of all human beings, which is rooted in the Dharmic principles of Sanatan Dharma. In 1934 Mahatma Gandhi also envisioned the ideal form of governance as Ram-Rajya. In Ram rajya the concept of equality was not just an abstract idea but a living reality. Lord Rama is depicted as the 'Maryada Purushottam' and his rule is characterised by deep commitment to justice and fairness. In this ideal kingdom justice is equal for everyone and the king is seen as the servant of people not just a ruler following his monarchy.

In the Uttarkand of Ramcharitmanas it is depicted that Ayodhya was a land of prosperity, where no one suffered from poverty or deprivation. The equitable distribution of resources ensures that all citizens have their basic needs met and can live in dignity. It presents a vision of a society where wealth is not concentrated in the hands of a few, but it is shared for the

collective good. This economic inclusiveness contributes to the overall harmony and happiness of the kingdom, as there are no disparities that could lead to social unrest.

The position of society can be understood in more clear manner from the chaupai 20 of the 7th canto Uttarkanda of Ramcharitmanas:

बरनाश्रम ढनज ढनज धरम ढनरत बेद पथ लोग।

चलढहं सदा पावढहं सुखढह नढहं भय सोक न रोग ॥ २० ॥

In the reign of Lord Rama everyone lives according to Varna and Ashram Dharma and they all indulge in the activities which are assigned to them in accordance to the Dharma. In this state there is no sorrow, no fear and no diseases, every individual lives a contained life in Ram's Rajya. This Chaupai sounds simple but it is the essence of an ideal state. If everyone around us would start performing their own duties as prescribed by Dharma, a maximum number of world problems could be solved.

The Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu also stated that Ram rajya was an ideal people centric democratic governance found on the values of empathy, inclusion, peaceful co-existence and constant quest for a better quality of life for the citizens that can serve as an inspirational springboard in our national endeavour to deepen our democratic roots.

Tulsidas ji mentions that men and women both were liberated in Ram Rajya irrespective of their gender as they became virtuous in the kingdom of Lord Rama. No one was suffering from ailments which suggests that society was highly prosperous and everyone progressed in harmony. It is also mentioned that everyone possessed shubh lakshan, that is all were skilled and learned even the females of Ram rajya were intelligent and everyone respected each other. There is no crime in this kingdom and every skill is equally respected. Ram Rajya not only nurtures humans but ecological balance was also maintained and even the wildest animals stayed in harmony. In the Ramcharitmanas it is clearly mentioned that Maa Sita also helped the house helpers with their daily chores in the palace of Lord Rama, she treated them with empathy and compassion, without differentiating. The prosperity of Ram rajya could not be expressed in words, the people of Ayodhya had their houses ornamented with precious gemstones and the doors were adorned with diamonds. Every businessman flourished in Ram Rajya whether it is a trader of clothes or a jeweller, equal opportunities were provided to everyone.

Comparative Analysis of Ram Rajya and Platonism

Platonism was proposed by Aristocles popularly known as Plato, who belonged to Athens. The idea of platonism revolves around a 'Just' society governed by philosophers-kings who possessed the wisdom and rationality to rule for common welfare. Plato envisioned a hierarchical society which was divided into classes based on their abilities and virtues. Platonism focused on abilities instead of equal opportunities for all. Plato's meritocratic system inherently lacks inclusiveness because it presupposes that not all individuals are equally capable or worthy of participating in governance. It ignores the innate characteristics of an individual.

In contrast Ram Rajya as described in Ramcharitmanas is an idealised conception of the rule of Shri Ram, where the ruler embodies the highest ethical and moral standards, and governance is characterised by compassion, fairness, and a deep commitment to the welfare of all subjects. Unlike the rigid hierarchy of Platonism, Ram Rajya is founded on the principles of Dharma (righteousness) and Vasudev Kutumbakam (earth as one family), where every individual, irrespective of caste, creed, gender or social status is treated with respect and dignity. Ram Rajya is deeply rooted in the idea of spiritual oneness of all beings. The ruler's primary duty is to ensure the well being and happiness of every individual, and governance is conducted with the understanding that all citizens are equal in the eyes of law.

While Platonism concept of Justice is static, defined by the maintenance of social order through the fulfilment of predefined roles, Ram Rajya's justice is transformative. It seeks to address the root cause of inequality and injustice, ensuring that the weakest and most vulnerable are protected and empowered. This is evident in various incidents from Ramcharitmanas where Shri Ram interacts with individuals from all walks of life, offering protection and support to those who are oppressed or marginalised.

When comparing both the models, Ram Rajya emphasises the moral and spiritual responsibility of the ruler to care for every individual, ensuring that governance is not just about maintaining order but about creating a society where all people can thrive. This makes Ram-Rajya a superior model as it combines the ethical governance reflecting a more comprehensive and compassionate approach to the well being of the society as a whole.

Government's Initiatives Resonating the Ideals of Ram Rajya

In India we are witnessing a period where we are on the way to becoming a 5 trillion dollar economy and our government is looking forward to implementing the principles of Ram Rajya in coordination with contemporary practices. A nation can attain ultimate pride when it remains rooted in its culture. The Indian government has launched several initiatives that resonate with the ideals of equality and inclusiveness as depicted in the concept of Ram Rajya from the Ramcharitmanas. These initiatives reflect the government's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable society, mirroring the ideals of Ram Rajya as envisioned in the Ramcharitmanas. Here are some initiatives that align with these ideals:

- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):**

Financial inclusion is a national priority of the government as it is an enabler for inclusive growth. Financial inclusion is important as it provides an avenue for the poor to bring their savings into the formal financial system, an avenue to remit money to their families in villages besides taking them out of the clutches of the usurious money lenders. This is a National Mission on Financial Inclusion encompassing an integrated approach to bring about comprehensive financial inclusion of all the households in the country.

The plan envisages universal access to banking facilities with at least one basic banking account for every household, financial literacy, access to credit, insurance and pension facility. In addition, the beneficiaries would get RuPay Debit card having inbuilt accident insurance cover of 1 lakh.

It is a known fact that in India, one segment of the population has access to encompassing regular banking facilities & portfolio counselling while the other segment of underprivileged and lower income group is totally deprived of even basic financial services.

The Ram Rajya ideal where every individual, regardless of their social status, has equal access to economic opportunities and the benefits of the state.

- **Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PMJAY):**

Ayushman Bharat, a flagship scheme of Government of India, was launched as recommended by the National Health Policy 2017, to achieve the vision of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). This initiative has been designed to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its underlying commitment, which is to "leave no one behind." Ayushman Bharat is an attempt to move from a sectoral and segmented approach of health service delivery to a comprehensive need-based health care service.

Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY is the largest health assurance scheme in the world which aims at providing a health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to over 12 crores poor and vulnerable families (approximately 55 crore beneficiaries) that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population. By implementation to Ayushman Bharat, India prioritises the welfare of citizens ensuring that they can live healthy and productive lives. In Ram Rajya the king takes proactive steps to relieve suffering, whether it's due to poverty, illness or injustice. This parallels Ayushman Bharat's goal of reducing suffering caused by unaffordable healthcare.

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY):**

The main objective of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana is to provide rural families with their "dream home" and raise their standard of living. This initiative not only provides essential amenities but also fosters a sense of pride and ownership with beneficiaries enjoying the benefits of modern amenities. In a continuation of the Government's efforts towards empowerment, the scheme has introduced a transformative provision, mandating that the female head of the family be the owner or co-owner of the house, thereby ensuring that women from economically weaker sections (EWS) and low-income groups (LIG) are given significant ownership and empowerment.

Additionally, PMAY emphasizes the use of environmentally sustainable and disaster-resilient construction practices, ensuring that rural housing is not only affordable but also durable and safe. By promoting the adoption of green technologies and eco-friendly materials, the programme aims to mitigate the environmental impact of housing construction while amplifying the resilience of rural communities to natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, and earthquakes. In Ram rajya every individual has a dignified living condition, and housing is a fundamental part of this dignity. PMAY reflects this ideal by striving to provide every citizen with a decent home, ensuring that even a poorest person has a place to call his own.

- **Pradhanmantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing Centrally Sponsored Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) under which maternity benefits of Rupees Five Thousand is provided in three instalments to Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) upon fulfilment of certain conditions. The eligible beneficiaries are also entitled to receive the cash incentive as per approved norms towards Maternity Benefit under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) after institutional delivery so that on an average, a woman gets

Rupees Six Thousand.

This scheme aims at improving the health of the lactating mother and newborn baby. In Ram Rajya mothers were considered very respectable and they were given the highest care and protection so that they can nurture virtuous kids for the future generations.

- **Kaushal Vikas Yojana:**

Under the Government of India's Skill India Mission (SIM), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) delivers skill, re-skill and up-skill training through an extensive network of skill development centres/colleges/institutes etc. under various schemes viz. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Sikhshan Sansthan (JSS), National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) and Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) through Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), to all the sections of the society across the country. The SIM aims at enabling youth of India to get future ready, equipped with industry relevant skills.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) was launched in 2015 with the objective to deliver skills to the youth of the country through Short Term Training (STT) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Owing to the success of PMKVY 1.0, wherein more than 19 lakh candidates were trained, the Scheme was relaunched in October, 2016 with an aim to train one Crore youth by the year 2020. Under PMKVY 2.0 (2016-2020), 1.10 Crore candidates were trained/oriented. This scheme resonates with the idea of equal opportunities and inclusiveness of Ram Rajya.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Ram Rajya as depicted in the Ramcharitmanas embodies an ideal state where justice, equality, and inclusiveness are the cornerstones of governance. This vision of a just society, where the welfare of all is prioritized, remains a timeless aspiration that resonates deeply in the Indian consciousness. In analyzing the policies of the present government through the lens of Ram Rajya, it becomes evident that there is a conscious effort to align modern governance with these ancient ideals. Initiatives aimed at social justice, economic empowerment, and the upliftment of marginalised communities reflect a commitment to inclusive development.

However, while significant strides have been made, the journey toward achieving the full realisation of Ram Rajya remains ongoing. Challenges such as economic disparity, social inequality, and the need for greater inclusivity in governance continue to persist. The teachings of the Ramcharitmanas serve as a guiding framework for addressing these issues, encouraging policymakers to strive towards a governance model that is not only efficient but also compassionate and just. In conclusion, the ideals of Ram Rajya provide a profound moral and ethical foundation for contemporary governance.

The policies of the present government, inspired by these values, demonstrate a commitment to building a society where equality and inclusiveness are not just aspirations but realities.

The continuous reflection on and application of these ancient principles can pave the way for a more just and equitable society, echoing the timeless wisdom of the Ramcharitmanas in the modern era. There is also a need of citizens participation in country's development by inculcating the principles of Dharma so that the actual Ram Rajya can be attained in Bharat.

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