



Political and Socio-Cultural Perspectives in *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku* by Amish Tripathi

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Abstract

Modern Indian English literature has shown great interest in an analysis of mythology. In Indian culture, two major epics Mahabharata and Ramayana discuss many aspects of politics, society, and human values. These great works have always attracted writers, who reinterpret them in different ways to suit modern context. This paper discusses on the political and cultural ideas presented in *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku* by Amish Tripathi. The author has a special talent for retelling mythological stories in a way that connects them with contemporary social and political issues. In *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku*, he revisits the well-known story of the *Ramayana* and presents it through a modern perspective, highlighting various political and cultural concerns relevant to today's world.

Key Words: Indian Mythology, Mythological Retelling, Political Discourse, Cultural Discourse, Ramayana Tradition, Dharma and Justice, Social Structure and Caste.

Amish Tripathi is well known Indian English writer. He received recognition for his "*Shiva Trilogy*." He has been a best seller with his *The Immortals of Meluha* and other two books *The Secret of Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. Amish was born on October 18, 1974. He studied at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai and IIM Kolkata. He had won several awards in his young age. Lord Shiva and his remarkable deeds are fantastically reimagined in the *Shiva Trilogy*. Amish depicts himself as a devotee of

Lord Shiva despite having liberal and secular religious views.

Amish's writings are characterized by modern perspective on a range of societal, religious, and general issues. He tells Indian myths in a very unique and modern way. It promotes and fortifies India's secular, democratic character. In his opinion, True religion is always comprehensive and tolerant. In one of his most recent works, *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku*, he recounts the tale of Ramchandra

(Ram) in a manner that differs from Tulsidas' Ramcharitmanas and Valmiki's Ramayan. He is aware that there are several Ramayanas with many variations and that the story of Ram is not just limited to India but also extends to several South Asian countries. The multiplicity of Ramayana versions is so amazing that it would be incorrect to call any one of them the authentic one; this is proof of the secular and liberal religious beliefs of the Indian people. Valmiki is known as the first poet to write the Ramayana. He portrayed Ram as Maryada Purshottam (an ideal man) rather than a divinity.

The narrative is told very differently by Amish Tripathi than it is in the *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku*. Ayodhya was wealthy and prosperous, with stunning temples, marketplaces, and theatres, due to the pouring of wealth. But Dashrath lacked vision and administrative skills as a ruler. Under his leadership, Ayodhya started to decline very quickly. When Bharat and Ram discussing, Ram says:

"We are a civilization in advanced state of decay. We're the most hypocritical people on earth. We criticize corruption in others, but are blind to our own dishonesty" (73).

Bharat's comments are deeply relevant to the snobbish and hypocritical mindset of modern India. Under Dasharatha's rule, Ayodhya's economy was steadily declining, leading to "peeling paint and fraying edges." To settle the kingdom's debts, even precious stones from the throne were removed. King Dasharath was a slave to his emotions, and the realm was heavily indebted. The kingdom's nobility believed they were exempt from the state's laws.

Ram and his siblings lived as common students rather than as royalty at Vashishta's Gurukul. Gurukul names were given to them. Ram was called Sudas, Bharat Vasu, Lakshman Paurav and Shatrughan Malaturdak. They served Guru Vashishta, prepared meals, and cleaned the ashram. Guru Vashishta

encouraged them in these scholastic talks as they debated a variety of philosophical topics. Shatrughan was 'soft-spoken' and 'intellect-oriented'. Tam's slogan was 'Truth, Duty, Honour'. He advocated for the rule of law. For him, hiding the truth is same as lying something. Ram was informed by Guru Vashishta that when the truth is painful, it is best to remain silent. The four brothers were once brought to Varun's village by Guru Vashishta. Varun was a warrior from the tribe. These regional adaptations of the Ramayana accurately depict Indian liberalism.

Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku gives Ram's path from a tormented and shunned prince to the founder of Ramrajya (an ideal state). Following Ravan kidnaps Sita at the beginning of the book, we are transported back in time to Ram's birth, his stay at Vashishta's Gurukul, his travels with Vishwamitra, his marriage to Sita, his victory against Ravan with Asurashtra, and his fourteen-year exile into the forest. Ram belonged to the Suryavanshi Dynasty, which was founded by Ikshvaku. The author skilfully combines historical details with imaginative creativity. The demythization of the Amish Ram narrative is its most notable feature. He gives the tale with mythological or legendary qualities a contemporary perspective that makes it highly relevant in the present era, especially in India.

The political and cultural discussion throughout the whole novel is what makes Scion of Ikshvaku powerful and relevant. Subtle philosophical reflections on a wide range of life and societal concerns, including ideal life, ideal society, marriage, polygamy, law, freedom, justice, environment, caste system, and more, have dispersed throughout the novel. In addition to providing insightful commentary on the customs and culture of the Ramayana era, these socio-cultural contours also highlight modern difficulties and problems.

In the novel, Amish portrays the economic decline of Ayodhya during King Dasharath's reign. Dasharath appears to hold a

dismissive attitude toward the Vaishyas, the mercantile class, which contributes to weakening the kingdom's economic foundations. Ayodhya had long depended on substantial annual tributes from the wealthy Lankan trader Kubera. As a ruler of the Sapta Sindhu, Dasharath believed that prosperity was the natural right of a conqueror. Tensions arose when Kubera unilaterally decided to reduce the commissions paid to Dasharath's kingdom. Offended by this move, Dasharath reacted with anger and even threatened Kubera with death if his demands were not met. Through this episode, Amish highlights the fragile relationship between political authority and economic power, suggesting that economic independence often remains subordinate to military strength—a reality that continues to resonate in modern times.

People were kind hosts and skilled fighters. There were around fifty thousand individuals living in their town. It was a tidy, well-run town with all the necessities. Since there was no crime, the houses had no doors. The town's elders reared the kids as a group. When the princes spoke with the town leader, he informed them that nobody owned any land. He said,

“we belong to the land.” (61)

Ram was really charmed by this beautiful community and their perfect way of life. Due to their strict adherence to the rule, the people lived selflessly, supporting one another. "Laws are the foundation on which a fulfilling life is built for a community," said Guru Vashishta. We are reminded of the Amish in Varuna's village. The Amish are a peaceful, moral, and religious community of people who live in various regions of the United States and Canada. They ignore the hectic and stressful modern lifestyle. They are comfortable, straightforward, and religious. They have simple, austere lives. A particular set of guidelines derived from biblical teachings control their lives. They are independent,

diligent, and morally pure individuals. It appears that Amish Tripathi had Amish people in mind when portraying the perfect way of life! The author emphasizes the fact that adhering to the rules and laws established for everyone is ultimately necessary for living an ideal life.

Afterwards, Ram and Sita talk on what constitutes an ideal society and how it should be run. According to Ram, a state that treats everyone equally is desirable. According to Sita, the issues cannot be resolved by merely advocating equality before the law. Although humans are distinct and unequal in the material world, true equality resides at the level of the spirit. There are highly educated and knowledgeable individuals, as well as talented traders, artists, and fighters. Since each of these individuals has a unique skill set, they should all be valued and acknowledged. According to Sita, a person's life path should be decided by their Karma rather than their birth. According to her, a society would be ideal if individuals were allowed to follow their passions and areas of skill rather than their ancestry or place of birth. An untouchable member of a lower caste might become a "Brahmarshi," and a brahmin's offspring is not always a brahmin by karma. Despite coming from low caste backgrounds, Valmiki and Ved Vyas are considered the actual torchbearers of Indian culture.

Amish Tripathi discusses the drawbacks of the caste system, which was based on birth even during the Ramayana and continues to this day. It used to be fluid and determined by karma rather than birth. He uses the compilation and editing of the Vedas by Ved Vyas as an example. Sita adamantly tells Ram that in order to remove this caste system, leaders must act harshly. It has undermined both our nation and our dharma. She goes on to propose having the state adopt every child born into the kingdom. And the king would bring them up, teach them, and refine their natural abilities. Sita's suggestion is consistent with Plato's ideas about education.

In chapter 8 There is an interesting discussion about the perfect lifestyle. Ram and his siblings are asked by Guru Vashishta what the ideal lifestyle is. According to Bharat, everyone is happy, prosperous, and in good health, and they should all be working with life's goal. He emphasized that having freedom is essential to living a happy and healthy life. According to Shatrughan, the weak dies while the strong live. It is the natural rule. It's how nature keeps everything in balance. According to him, a society shouldn't overlook the fact talented individuals are the reason it develops. Over time, a society that disregards its brains and gifted individuals deteriorates.

There are two ways to live: masculine and feminine, Guru Vashishta informs his students. These two are inseparable parts of the same psychological state. It is comparable to the single tree of life. The tree's hardness, solidity, strength, and unwavering character are what give it its male strength. The tree's softness, kindness, and yielding suppleness are what give it its feminine power. Both are critical to the tree's life.

According to Guru Vashishta, the male way of life is compassionate and creative at its finest, but as feminine civilizations deteriorate, they become corrupt and careless. In contrast, the feminine way of life is guided by freedom, passion, and beauty. In contrast, the masculine civilization is effective, fair, and egalitarian at its best, but as it deteriorates, it becomes obsessive, inflexible, and harsh to the weak. Vashishta Muni says that when one declines, the other takes place in cyclical manner. He remarks,

“Actually, India is a confused nation today. It does not understand its own nature, which seems to be a hotchpotch of the masculine and feminine way.” (86)

Further, He said that the masculine style of life was taught by Shukracharya. The Asuras, who were regarded as demonic believers, looked to him as their teacher. They

were later defeated by the Devas, who destroyed the Asura Empire and drove them out of India. The Asuras were monotheists who worshipped Ekam, the only God. They learned from Shukracharya that all other manifestations of the Ekam were illusory and untrue. Asuras' confidence in Ekam eliminated all of their differences. But only believers in a single God were on an equal footing. Additionally, those who believed in several gods were viewed as enemies. They became exclusive and demanded personal commitment. They were fervently strict and completely intolerant. They started murdering anyone who didn't follow Ekam. Religious extremism and intolerance continue to wreak havoc in the modern world, leading to acts of terrorism and the brutal murder of innocent people.

“The masculine way is often exclusivist, intolerant and rigid while the feminine way is division, argumentative and incoherent. Very often, there is endless debate, analysis and paralysis” (94)

The present Indian parliament and government are examples of the paralyzing aspects of the feminine way of life. Ram believed that India needs a male approach to address these issues after witnessing the inefficiency and decisiveness of the feminine way of life.

But it should be devoid of extremism, intolerance, and rigidity. He was convinced that even in a patriarchal society, asking questions should be encouraged. Later, Vishwamitra informs Ram that Shukracharya travelled to India from Egypt. Large-hearted and kind, India embraced him and made him her own, honouring him as a great rishi. Since he had resided in Ayodhya, Asuras had never attacked Ayodhyans under the previous rules.

Ram, Bharat, and Shatrughan talked about the ideas of justice, freedom, and the law. Bharat had some doubts regarding the kindness of people. He said that most people have the capacity for greatness and goodness, but they are not a reality. He claimed that people are

inherently self-centred. If it served their own interests, they would adhere by the law. Ram stood up for the law, stating that everyone must abide by it regardless of their social standing or financial situation. He thought that a good leader would encourage others to see their own virtue. A competent leader may establish a system that harnesses human nature's selfishness for the benefit of society. For Ram, Dharma was the law, and Dharma superseded all things, including gods. Ayodhya's citizens, especially the wealthy nobles, disobeyed all laws with impunity.

Ram was given the responsibility of head police, which he carried out with great integrity and effectiveness. Based on the Smritis, the code book penned by ancient scholars and rishis, he implemented several revisions. After studying these Smritis, he chose just, logical, straightforward, and pertinent laws. Stone tablets bearing these regulations were put in the temples. He granted the police the authority to enforce the law without fear or favor. He firmly felt that police should be respected by society, but they haven't been. They were frequently under pressure and intimidated by the powerful. Ram's successful actions decreased Ayodhya's crime rate since criminals were either imprisoned or put to death without unnecessary delay. Women and innocent people were safe and secure. Even at night, women could now go out. He declared that the law will not spare anyone. Mobility is more about having more responsibility than it is about being above the law.

Ram had a different conception of justice than Bharat and other Ayodhya residents. Ram and his brother consider Roshni, Manthara's daughter, like a sister, but she was gangraped. Dhenuka was a minor and the primary criminal. Dhenuka was spared the death penalty because he was a kid, but seven other rapists were put to death in accordance with the law. Ram was certain that the law should never be broken. He supported the law despite his intense rage at Roshni's horrible rape

and death. But Bharat devised a cunning scheme and cruelly murdered Dhenuka as revenge. Ram didn't even know how Dhenuka was killed.

Ram has lofty and idealistic ideas about marriage, women, and monogamy. Ram said that women's mental capacities were on par with men's when he learned that Sita was Mithila's prime minister. He valued women's intelligence and thought they would make capable leaders and administrators if they were given equal opportunity. In the past, Kshatriya marriages were seen as a way to form political alliances. Ram disagreed with this wicked tradition. He determined that marriage was a holy union of a man and a woman. It ought not to be regarded as a political alliance. As a holy alliance between two souls, he embodied real marriage. For this reason, he considered polygamy as an insult to women and supported monogamy. Ram's opinions are gender-neutral. He claimed that polygamy was bad because it discriminated against women and favoured males. He reaffirmed his promise to stick by one lady for the rest of his life.

Ram told Sita that there shouldn't be any force in marriage. The worst thing that can happen to a person is to marry the wrong person. A person should marry someone they like and who will enable them to discover and realize their life's purpose. Wives and husbands support one another in achieving life's goals. This is the real marriage, in Ram's opinion. Like a contemporary philosopher, he believes that love is looking in the same direction rather than at one another. He thought that a husband and wife should value each other's uniqueness.

Sita has Ram's level of intellectual maturity. She loves Ram because of his wisdom and calm, collected nature. She was remarkably knowledgeable about Indian texts. Lakshman was informed by Sita about Lord Manus. Every era has its own Manu who created rules that were appropriate for the times and the surroundings. When Ram, Lakshman, and Sita

arrived to the southern banks of the Narmada River, Sita stated that although death is not auspicious, it is the direction of death according to scripture. It is the start of regeneration rather than its conclusion. "No material ever escapes the universe," she said. It only modifies the form. Modern science agrees to this fact that no energy ever dies, it merely changes into another form. The Bhagwad Gita explicitly says,

"Na Hanyate, Hanyamane Sharire"

(Nothing is killed, only body dies) (Gita, 20)

A key idea in Hindu philosophy is the immortality of the soul. According to Lord Krishna in chapter two of the Bhagwad Gita, the soul is immortal. It is imperishable, immortal, and childless. It is only a change of dress; it only modifies the body's clothing.

As a result, Amish's Scion of Ikshvaku offers insightful observations on philosophical, political, and cultural matters. The book's main focus is on the qualities of an ideal society and man. The kidnapping of Sita marks the conclusion of the first Ramchandra series. The narrative of Ram, the perfect king, the ideal husband, the ideal brother, and the ideal son, should be covered in at least three or four more novels. It is important to keep in mind that human ideals are inherently flawed since they are more human. Amish's popularity is a result of his skilful storytelling and insightful views on a range of social and personal concerns.

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