# Political Philosophy in the Ramayana: Anarchy and Governance in Contemporary Discourse

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-04-12-006

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This research looks at the political ideas in Valmiki's Ramayana, focusing on the Kaschit-Sarga of the AyodhyaKanda. It aims to understand how these ideas connect with the today's governance issues in Indian subcontinent. The study examines three linked themes: the moral bases of dharma shown through Rama's great leadership; the severe effects of anarchy (arajakatva) explained by the Matsya-Nyaya principle in AyodhyaKanda and the complex governance systems like kingship, ministerial roles, and general assemblies (Sabha). By comparing these ideas with the Western political thought which includes Hobbes's social contract theory, Kant's ethics, and modern democratic values, the paper shows that ancient Indian political ideas provide unique insights into maintaining the social order, preventing government failure, and encouraging the ethical leadership in the governance. This researchplaces these ancient lessons within the context of current political instability in the Indian subcontinent, looking at how countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal deal with corruption, weak institutions, which leads to social unrest. By blending analysis of Sanskrit verses with current political theory, this study argues that the Ramayana's political philosophy offers lasting guidance for today's governance, especially in balancing authority and dharma, avoiding the dangers of a power vacuum and anarchy, and promoting inclusive representation in the government. These findings, highlight the ongoing relevance of ancient Indian governance for tackling twenty-first-century issues in leadership, ethics, and political stability.

**Keywords:** *Ayodhya Kanda (Kaschit-Sarga); Dharma and Ethical Leadership; Matsya-Nyaya (Anarchy); Ancient Indian Political Thought; Comparative Governance.*

# 1. Introduction

The Ramayana, written by the sage Valmiki, is one of the greatest writings in the ancient Indian canon of literature. Serving not only as an epic story, it is also a long philosophical analysis of politics and governance. Of its many parts, the Ayodhya Kandaholds special significance as an organized discourse on statecraft, administrative ethics, and the principles of effective governance. This dialogue between Rama and Bharata summarizes the essential qualities of a king and the methods to prevent the disruption and chaos of society.

In his travelogue Following the Equator, Mark Twain remarkably said, "*This is indeed India! The cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, grandmother of legend, and great-grandmother of tradition.*"[1] Currently, India is at a critical juncture - betwixt the perennial wisdom of its civilizational heritage and the rising tide of political and social upheaval. Across the Indian subcontinent, nations like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh grapple with questions of corruption, deterioration in values, and outside intervention, leading to wide-ranging protests and colour revolutions.

The Ayodhya Kanda is an eternal warning regarding the peril that is anarchy. It invites reflection on why, even in periods of peace, societies might be prone to revolt and justify resistance movements. The Valmiki Ramayana contains arguably the greatest ancient analysis of why the preference for authority, flawed though it is, is preferable to the chaos inherent in *arajakatva* (anarchy). Chapter 67 of the Ayodhya Kanda presents, in the words of the rishis, the essential need to establish a monarch in the wake of Dasaratha's death, illustrating the dire consequences that result from governance without leadership. Anarchy is not portrayed as some idealistic utopian dream of freedom, but rather breakdown of all social organization and moral constitution. This understanding closely relates to the understanding of the *Matsya-Nyaya*, or law of the fish, described in the Arthashastra,[2] that in the absence of an authoritative supranational regulatory mechanism, the strong prey on the weak. Having made an in-depth analysis of the Ayodhya Kanda, this paper explores the inbuilt political philosophy, moral foundations of governance, policies for maintaining social cohesiveness, and the relevance of these ancient maxims to today's political challenges. It argues that the Ramayana continues to be an important fount of guidance for today's governance, specifically in polities beset with volatility and institutional weakness.

# 2. Perils of Anarchy in the Rāmāyaṇa

Today, we are seeing a rise in protests against the current system worldwide. Many theories try to explain this phenomenon by blaming the government for the protest culture. However, protest can lead to chaos. In times of chaos, society can be taken over by harmful individuals, and the state can become a band of thieves. We can understand the reason behind this mindset. Peaceful protests show a clear psychological pattern. When people notice a gap between what they believe they deserve from society and what they can achieve and what are their potential, then the frustration turns into moral anger. This, in turn, leads to action driven by shared identity and belief in their effectiveness i.e. effectiveness of group. Research indicates that collective identity, feelings of injustice, and faith in group success can predict mobilization. Conversely, beliefs that support the system can prevent it. Classic frustration-aggression dynamics explain how blocked goals lead to anger seeking an outlet, especially against perceived unfair targets. In group settings, moral obligation and moral anger can connect with a sense of group effectiveness. This transforms deprivation into focused action rather than meaningless rage. Yet, people often overlook human nature and how revolutions or chaos have typically benefited only a select few, making the utopian vision of revolution lose its appeal. Western thinkers have also commented on this. Jacques Mallet du Pan, a French journalist and critic of the Revolution, first used the phraseand it goes like, *"Like Saturn, the Revolution devours its own children"* (Considérations sur la nature de la Révolution de France, 1793).[3] He drew that from the Roman

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[1]Twain, M. (1897). Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World. American Publishing Company, p. 149.

[2]Kautilya. (1992). Arthashastra (L. N. Rangarajan, Trans., Book I, Chapter 4, p. 12). Penguin Books.

[3]Mallet du Pan, J. (1793). Considérations sur la nature de la Révolution de France et sur les causes qui enprolongent la durée. Londres: [s.n.], p. 3.

myth of Saturn, who ate his offspring or in this sense children to avoid being overthrown. Mallet du Pan's observation also reflected the tragic pattern of the French Revolution, which, in its push for liberty, turned against its own leaders through waves of purges, murders and executions. G. W. F. Hegel later interpreted this situation through his dialectical philosophy. He pointed out that the Revolution "began with the demand for liberty and ended with the Reign of Terror" (Hegel, 1837)[4]. For Hegel, the Revolution's fall into chaos showed the contradiction between limitless freedom and the need for rational moral order. Karl Marx added to this analysis by placing revolutionary self-destruction within the material conditions of class struggle. He argued that "*men can make their own history, but they do not make it as they please*" (Marx, 1852)[5]. To Marx, revolutions consume their own when structural inequalities remain. And This forces each generation to repeat the mistakes of its predecessors and its never-ending loop. George Orwell later described this phenomenon in Animal Farm, in which the revolutionary promise of equality turns into tyranny. He quotes *"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others"* (Orwell, 1945)[6]. Across these thinkers, the underlying message is clear i.e. revolutions without ethical restraint or institutional balance often fall into cycles of betrayal and destruction. They often turn the ideals of freedom into the tools of oppression.

The Valmiki Ramayana offers one of the most thorough ancient analyses of why authority, even if flawed, is better than chaos (arajakatva). In the Ayodhya Kanda, Chapter 67, sages discuss the urgent need to appoint a king after Dasaratha's death. They provide a detailed explanation of the terrible consequences of anarchy. The sages view anarchy not as a romantic ideal of freedom, but as a disaster for civilization itself. The key slokas illustrate this vividly.

नाराजकेजनपदेमहायज्ञेषुयज्वनः।
ब्राह्मणावसुसम्पन्नाविसृजन्त्याप्तदक्षिणाः।।2.67.14।।
Nārājakejanapademahāyajñeṣuyajvanaḥ

[4]Hegel, G. W. F. (1975). Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, Reason in History (H. B. Nisbet, Trans., p. 25). Cambridge University Press.
[5]Marx, K. (1852). The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Chapter 1, p. 1).
[6]Orwell, G. (1946). Animal Farm (p. 112). Harcourt, Brace and Company

Brāhmaṇāvasusampannāvisṛjantyāptadakṣiṇāḥ

Meaning *"In a ruler-less territory, festivals and gatherings exalting the kingdom in which actors and dancers exhibit their talents are not frequently arranged".*[7]This sloka reveals that anarchy first destroys cultural lifethe very expressions of human creativity and community celebration that differentiate civilization from the barbarism. In a Polytheistic culture the celebration plays a very significant role, it allows the creative way to attain the supreme reality i.e. brahman and brahman manifest itself into the form of art music and creativity unlike monotheists culture where portrayals of supreme lord isprohibited.

In an another sloka Valmiki talked about how anarchy destroys the civic culture and civic institutions.

नाराजकेजनपदेकारयन्तिसभांनराः।
उद्यानानिचरम्याणिहृष्टाःपुण्यगृहाणिच।।2.67.12।।
Nārājakejanapadekārayantisabhāṁnarāḥ
Udyānāni ca ramyāṇihṛṣṭāḥpuṇyagṛhāṇi ca.

Meaning *"In a country where there is no king People do not cause to make a delightful assembly nor erect beautiful parks or temples"* *The absence of authority leads to the collapse of both civic institutions (sabhas) and sacred spaces, indicating the breakdown of both political and spiritual life.*[8]The absence of authority leads to the collapse of both civic institutions (*sabhas*) and sacred spaces, and it indicates the breakdown of both political and spiritual life. This verse also makes this fact that there was some kind of existing civic institution existed in Ramayana period where people meet and exchange their ideas and thoughts.

In a another sloka sage Valmiki parallels the Arthashastra's concept of *matsyanyaya* (law of the fish), where "*the strong devour the weak*" in the absence of governance. The epic presents this through the powerful metaphor

नाराजकेजनपदेस्वकंभवतिकस्यचित्।
मत्स्याइवनरानित्यंभक्षयन्तिपरस्परम्।।2.67.31।।
Nārājakejanapadesvakaṁbhavatikasyacit
Matsyāivanarānityaṁbhakṣayantiparasparam.

Meaning *"In a rulerless land, there is no one's own property for anyone; like fishes, people*

[7]Valmiki. (n.d.). Valmiki Ramayana: Ayodhyakanda (Sarga 67, Shloka 14).
[8]Valmiki. (n.d.). Valmiki Ramayana: Ayodhyakanda (Sarga 67, Shloka 12).

*always devour one another."* This śloka (*VālmīkiRāmāyaṇa*, *AraṇyaKāṇḍa*, 2.67.31)[9] captures the essence of anarchy i.e. the complete breakdown of property rights and social contractsand it leads to a Hobbesian state where life becomes *"solitary, poor, nasty, [10]brutish, and short."* This indicates that even in ancient times, there existed an awareness and fear of anarchy among masses, who clearly understood destructive consequences of anarchy. A similar notion is reflected in the *AraṇyaKāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where demons (rākṣasas) disrupt and destroy the yajñas (sacrificial rituals) of rishis. After that, Śrī Rāma killed the demons and re-establishes the writ of the state in the forest. Although the forest itself was not entirely anarchic, the state's control over the organized violence was weak, and it allowed the demons to act with impunity. This episode underscores the ancient Indian understanding that the absence of state authority leads to moral and social chaos, a condition closely resembling political anarchy.

In a another sloka sage Valmiki talked about the how the anarchy or law lessness destroys the business and the economy of the country.

नाराजकेजनपदेवणिजोदूरगामिनः।
गच्छन्तिक्षेममध्वानंबहुपण्यसमाचिताः।।2.67.22।।

Nārājakejanapadevaṇijodūragāminaḥ
Gacchantikṣemamadhvānaṁbahupaṇyasamācitāḥ.

Meaning*"In a ruler less land, traders who travel to distant places carrying various goods cannot do so safely."[11]* This verse (VālmīkiRāmāyaṇa, AraṇyaKāṇḍa, 67.22) highlights that the best suited condition for commerce is stability supported by law and order. No business can flourish amid chaos and the inevitably of anarchy leads to the collapse of a economic structure of the society. In such conditions, a conflict economy replaces regular economic activity, benefiting only the powerful while exploiting the poor and the common people like the MatsyaNyaya. This is why Sage Vālmīki

warns against the ills of anarchy and its devastating impact on the economic foundation of the state.

In an another sloka Valmiki talked about the how anarchy affects the women. The sloka says

नाराजकेजनपदेउद्यानानिसमागताः।
सायाह्नेक्रीडितुंयान्तिकुमार्योहेमभूषिताः।।2.67.17।।

Nārājakejanapadeudyānānisamāgatāḥ
Sāyāhnekrīḍituṁyāntikumāryohemabhūṣitāḥ.

Meaning *"In a ruler less territory, girls adorned in gold do not go together to parks to play there in the evening".[12]*This *śloka* also says the condition of women at that time. While the *Rāmāyaṇa* is often critiqued as being anti-women, this verse indicates that in a rulerless territory, girls adorned with gold could not safely go to parks to play in the evening. This establishes the very fact that, under normal circumstances, girls did play outdoors in the evening while wearing ornaments, highlighting that the environment was quite safe for them when law and order were maintained in the state. The verse thus underscores how the absence of governance directly threatened the security of women in society and the state.

The ancient Indian perspective resolves the modern paradox of peaceful protest through a sophisticated understanding of human nature and social organization. While modern psychology explains why people challenge authority even in comfortable circumstances, the Ramayana explains why such challenges, if successful in destroying authority entirely, lead to consequences far worse than the original grievances.The text presents authority (*Rajadharma*) not as an end in itself but as the necessary foundation for all higher human aspirations. The famous comparison illustrates this

यथादृष्टिःशरीरस्यनित्यमेवप्रवर्तते।
तथानरेन्द्रोराष्ट्रस्यप्रभवस्सत्यधर्मयोः।।2.67.33।।

Yathādṛṣṭiḥśarīrasyanityamevapravartate
Tathānarendrorāṣṭrasyaprabhavaḥsatyadharmayoḥ.

Meaning *"As eyesight helps the body move correctly, a king is essential for upholding truth and*

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[9]Valmiki. (n.d.). Valmiki Ramayana: Ayodhyakanda (Sarga 67, Shloka 31).

[10]Hobbes, T. (1651). Leviathan, or the matter, forme, & power of a common-wealth ecclesiasticall and civill (Chapter XIII). London: Andrew Crooke.

[11]Valmiki. (n.d.). Valmiki Ramayana: Ayodhyakanda (Sarga 67, Shloka 22).

[12]Valmiki. (n.d.). Valmiki Ramayana: Ayodhyakanda (Sarga 67, Shloka 17).

*righteousness in a country."*[13]This shloka highlights the crucial role of a king in maintaining the moral and social order of the state. Just as eyesight is vital for the body to function and coordinate effectively, the king is equally important for the existence and growth of truth (Satya) and righteousness (dharma) in the state. Without the king's guidance and authority, justice, law, and ethical behaviour cannot be maintained, making society susceptible to disorder and moral decline. This analogy shows that political leadership goes beyond administration; it is fundamentally about ethics and shaping society. A ruler's ability to protect dharma and ensure that societal functions run smoothly is key to the well-being of the state.

As Mahatma Gandhi recognized when he cited Rama-Rajya as the vision for an independent India, the aim is not to eliminate authority but to transform it into dharmic governance in more decentralized form that promotes human well-being.[14] The protests and challenges that arise in peaceful societies reflect the democratic essence of the dharmic principle i.e. the ongoing improvement of authority to better support truth (Satya) and righteousness (dharma). The ancient sages' concern about anarchy, powerfully conveyed in the Ramayana, serves as an important counter to idealistic views of complete freedom. It reminds us that the alternative to flawed authority is often not perfect freedom or anarchic freedom, but it leads to chaos in civilization.

### 3. Governance in Ramayana.

The polity described in the *Ramayana* shows strong similarities with the political ideas found in the *Vedas and upnishads*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Artha-sastra*, and the *Dharma-sastra* texts such as the *YājñavalkyaSmriti*. The concept that a king's primary duty is to uphold *Varnashrama Dharma*[15] appears consistently across Indian literature for nearly two thousand years. Because what we perceived as a curse i.e. varnashrama dharmasustained the Indian society till the very 19th century This continuity is not limited to theory but is evident in practice as well.

For example, the *Aṣṭa-pradhāns* (eight ministers) of Shivaji in the medieval period closely resemble the eight *Amātyas* (counsellors) of King Dasharatha in the *Ramayana*.

The idea of the king as the protector and servant of *Dharma* remains constant throughout Indian history, demonstrating a remarkable continuity in political thought and governance. Even administrative features such as the tax rate of *ṣaḍbhāga*(one-sixth of the produce) persisted across centuries in India, it reflects the enduring nature of India's political philosophy and statecraft. (N. Siva Senani,Polity in Ramayana, Ch 17, inflibneteBooks)

### 4. Kingship

The term *Rājan*, though etymologically derived from the Sanskrit root *rāj* (to shine), is, within the framework of Hindu polity, more commonly associated with the root *rañj*[16] (to please). Consequently, according to Hindu political thought, *prajanurañjana*the act of pleasing and serving the subjectsis regarded as the foremost duty of a king. Indeed, as articulated by Vālmīki, the ideal ruler is expected to demonstrate unwavering devotion to the welfare of his people, to the extent that he should be prepared to sacrifice his nearest and dearesteven his own lifeif required for the good of his subjects. As a fundamental aspect of *prajanurañjana*, the king was required to ensure the complete security of his subjects' lives and property against both external aggression and internal disorder. Moreover, the king's duty of protection was not confined merely to townspeople and villagers; it extended equally to ascetics and hermits dwelling in forests.[17] This inclusive conception of kingship stands in marked contrast to the practices observed in the West, where, during periods of war, state generals often abandoned their hermits, shepherds, and forest-dwelling communities. For instance, during the Thirty Years' War, rural Germany witnessed the depopulation of nearly one-third of its inhabitants, as forest communities and herders were forced to flee into the hills (Schiller, F., 1790). Similarly, during the Hundred Years' War, both English and French forces

[13]Valmiki. (n.d.). Valmiki Ramayana: Ayodhyakanda (Sarga 67, Shloka 33).

[14]Gandhi, M. K. (1953). The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi (R. K. Prabhu & U. R. Rao, Eds., p. 393). Navajivan Publishing House

[15]Kautilya. (1992). The Arthashastra (L. N. Rangarajan, Trans.). Penguin Books India. (Original work published ca. 4th century BCE), Book I, Chapter 3, p. 70.

[16] Jayswal, K.P., Hindu Polity, p.189.

[17]Valmiki. (n.d.). Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana (Geeta Press Edition, Ayodhya Kanda, Sarga 1, Shloka 22). Gorakhpur: Gita Press

frequently plundered monasteries; records from Benedictine and Cistercian orders attest to the widespread destruction of hermit dwellings and the confiscation of monastic lands.

In the Western political tradition, monarchs were generally autocratic in nature, and the misfortunes of the state were seldom attributed to their personal conduct. Even in contemporary liberal democracies, such imputations are often regarded as unwarranted or defamatory. In contrast, during the period depicted in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the king was conceived as both the protector and upholder of *dharma* (law and moral order). An unimpeachable personal character and exemplary conduct were considered essential qualities of an ideal rulernot merely because the populace tended to emulate the "first citizen," but also because it was widely believed that the moral and material well-being of the kingdom was directly influenced by the king's righteousness. Thus, calamities or social disorders were often interpreted as consequences of wrongs of the ruler[18]. For instance, the drought in Aṅgadeśa was attributed to some default on the part of its ruler, Romapāda; similarly, the premature death of his son was ascribed by the *brāhmaṇas* to the misrule of the king himself[19].

The parables in the Vedic literature clearly show that kingship in India arose out of military necessity. The *Ramayana* also mentions monarchy as the sole form of government. According to Vālmīki, an ideal king should be a capable military leaderone who, when enraged, could be a terror even to the gods on the battlefield. Although the kings in the *Ramayana* generally belong to the *Kshatriyakula* (warrior lineage), we also hear of other rulers such as the *Rākṣasa-rāja*Ravana in Lanka, *Vānara-rāja*Bāli and later Sugriva in Kiṣkindhā, and *Niṣāda-rāja* Guha in Śṛṅgaverapura. There are also several references to *Mleccha* kings in the *Ramayana*. Hence, it can be inferred that kingship was not restricted exclusively to the *Kshatriya* class; rather, leadership emerged according to regional and demographic contextsmuch like the representational diversity seen in modern democracies. Therefore, it would be incorrect to claim that caste-based exclusivity had taken firm root during the period of the *Ramayana*.

## 5. Advisors and executive officers

In the post Vedic period we can clearly see the role of ministers and advisor and necessity for the king. The prominence if ministers for the king is clearly shown in the Valmiki Ramayana. Valmiki considers a minister to be the king's best help and it is the who advises the king about his welfare. For ministers Valmiki employs the words *amatya, sachivas and mantri*. In which mantris are basically the advisors or councillors and *sachiv* and *amatyas* are the executive officers. Although These names use interchangeably throughout the Indian knowledge tradition. (Sharma, R, 1971) argues that, As to the distribution of duties among the *amatyas,* there is no clear indication of it in the Ramayana. If the names of Daśaratha's ministers be indicative of their functions, which is not unlikely, we may perhaps infer something from their names. Griffith has suggested that the ministers Dhrishṭi, Jayanta and Vijaya meaning 'Boldness', 'Victorious son of Indra', and 'Conquest' respectively, were associated with the portfolio of War; Siddhārtha and Arthasādhaka meaning 'the successful man' and 'one efficient in the acquisition of riches or wealth' respectively, with Finance; Aśoka meaning 'with-out sorrow' and *Mantrapāla* meaning 'one who protects mantra or the sacred texts' with Law and Justice; and Sumantra with miscellaneous affairs. This last officer was the Royal Bard, the Royal Charioteer, the Royal Equerry and the Private Secretary to Dasaratha. But even if this general reasoning be accepted, it is difficult to associate Aśoka with law and justice merely on the ground that a minister can cause sorrow to the people by interfering with their person and property. Similarly,*Mantrapala* may not mean 'one who protects the sacred text', for in political contexts the word mantra stands more often for Diplomacy' and thus *Mantrapala* may have been minister in charge of 'foreign affairs.' *Arthasādhaka* may similarly have been connected with finance, *Dharmapāla*with justice, and Sumantra perhaps with the king's Ministerial Council. But all this can at the most be regarded as a plausible surmise. In fact, the suggestion for the different portfolios in the ministry should come from what Valmiki considered to be the aims of the state. If we keep this in view and then analyse

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[18]Valmiki. (n.d.). Shrimad Valmiki Ramayana (Geeta Press Edition, Uttarakanda, Sarga 76, Verses 20–21). Gorakhpur: Gita Press.

[19]Valmiki. (1960). Valmiki Ramayana (Vol. VII, Uttarakanda, Sarga 76, Verse 10). Baroda: Oriental Institute. Lahore critical edition

the description of the evils to which according to the Ramayana a state could be subject in the absence of a ruler and also consider certain other references we can easily infer that the main tasks with which a ministry could be concerned were maintenance of law and order, defence of the state, justice, financial administration, foreign affairs and ensuring the unobstructed performance of one's duties-religious as well as secular.(Sharma, R, 1971, pg. 319-20). In this sense, we can conclude that without the ministries, the state cannot function effectively. This is evident in the *Kacchit Sarga* of the Valmiki Ramayana, where Sri Rama speaks to Bharata about the importance of espionage and its extensive network. Without the relevant administrative departments, such operations would be impossible. Therefore, the earlier assumptions regarding ministerial roles are certainly valid.

## 6. Sabha and the people's representation.

Vālmīki's Sabha was the main meeting place for the king and ministers and all officials and non-official members. It served as a general assembly where important state decisions were discussed and made. Although Vālmīki sometimes used the terms like*Pariṣad*[20]and *Saṃsad*[21] in the Rāmāyaṇa, he mostly used the word Sabha to refer to the royal assembly.

After King Daśaratha died, Sage Vasiṣṭha, who was then de-facto acting prime minister, called the assembly together. He did this according to the rules of *Rājadharma* to ensure continuity and to prevent chaos in politics. Even though Vasiṣṭha was not a king, he held executive power during this transitional time. This highlighted the very importance of wise advice and stability in governance.

The Sabha of Ayodhyā included both officials and non-official. The officials were the *mantrins*, *amātyas,* and *sachivas*, similar to modern executives in parliament. The non-official members represented the people, including the *paura-janapadas* (citizens and rural representatives), *naigamas*(guild representatives), and the tributary kings. Therefore, the Sabha can be seen as an early form of a representative

assembly, with both executive and deliberative members involved in decision-making process (Sharma, 1999). A key part of this political structure was the *naigamas*, who were the representative of traders and merchants. Their leaders, called *nigama-vṛddhas* or *nigama-mukhyas*, took part in the general assembly of Ayodhyā. In contrast, what we witness in the today's governance often lacks direct representation from the business community, which can lead to lobbying and corruption in the political institutions. The ancient Sabha's inclusion of trade representatives helped ensure transparency, accountability, and power sharing (Kane, 1941). In the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, particularly in the verses 15 and 16, Vālmīki clearly states that the Sabha had the power to accept or reject the king's proposals and even to suggest alternatives of the proposal. This shows that there were a debate system and an early balance of power in the governance of Ayodhyā.

Vālmīki also described the assembly in Laṅkā under Rāvaṇa's rule. Although Laṅkā's political structure was different from Ayodhyā's, the influence of *Śāstric* doctrines in governance was clear. In a discussion with Vibhīṣaṇa, Rāvaṇa said: "*By skipping over all doctrines of the Śāstras, one who seeks to win merely by obstinacy is indeed a fool*"[22]. This shows that even within Laṅkā's politics, there was a respect for scriptural authority and reasoned debate. Unlike Ayodhyā, where the Sabha included varied social groups, the Laṅkan assembly was made up of aristocratic families, including queens and royal mothers, also representation from different sections of society was there who took part in decision-making. Vālmīki also mentioned that queens were present in the Sabha of Kiṣkindhā, indicating that women in power had advisory roles in governance[23].

One notable example of Laṅkā's deliberative process happened after Hanumān burned the city. Rāvaṇa called an emergency sabha to discuss the situation. Prahasta, the commander-in-chief of lanka, admitted that their overconfidence had led to the burn of lanka. While many *rākṣasas*seeeked revenge, Vibhīṣaṇa and his

[20]Valmiki. (n.d.). ŚrīVālmīkiRāmāyaṇa (AyodhyāKāṇḍa, Sarga 67, Verse 1). Gorakhpur: Gita Press.
[21]Valmiki. (n.d.). ŚrīVālmīkiRāmāyaṇa (Sundara Kāṇḍa, 53.1). Gorakhpur: Gita Press.

[22]Valmiki. (1960). Valmiki Ramayana (Vol. V, Sarga 88, Verse 12). Baroda: Oriental Institute.

[23]Valmiki, Valmiki Ramayana, Vol. IV, Kishkindha Kanda, Sarga 26, Verse 30 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1960)

advisors pushed for peace and negotiations with Rāma, viewing him as a righteous king who followed Dharma. The debate between Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa shows a remarkable acceptance of differing opinions in the Lankan assembly. When Vibhīṣaṇa decided not to follow Rāvaṇa, the king, though angry, allowed him to act according to his beliefs. The assembly, through Prahasta, announced, *"It is not possible for you to stay here; you may go wherever you wish, for the mighty rākṣasas and* King Rāvaṇa *are angered with you"*[24]. Interestingly, while Vibhīṣaṇa's followers chose to leave with him, there were no penalties against them. More examples of deliberative traditions can be seen in wartime assemblies, where opposing views were accepted. Atikāya, for instance, openly criticized Rāvaṇa's war strategy and condemned the abduction of Sītā, yet he faced no consequences since he remained loyal to Laṅkā[25].

These examples showthe Rāmāyaṇadescribes the early forms of participatory and consultative governance in both Ayodhyā and Laṅkā. While not much democratic in today's sense, these assemblies reflect an early spirit of democracy based on discussion, representation, and moral limits on power and supremacy of dharma. They highlight the idea that ancient Indian governance acknowledged dialogue and collective wisdom and dharma as essential to its foundation (Sharma, 1999; Kane, 1941).

## 7. Conclusion

The Ramayana is an important work in political philosophy. It offers valuable insights of ethics, anarchy, and governance that still matter in today's world. This study shows that Valmiki's epic goes beyond its religious themes and is essential for understanding statecraft and moral leadership in current times.

The ethical framework in the Ramayana focuses on dharma. It provides a strong alternative framework to modern systems that separate ethics from governance. Sri Rama inculcate this ideal through his commitment to *Satya*and compassion and his willingness to sacrifice his personal happiness for the sake of his duties i.e. *Rajdharma*.

In today time which is marked by political corruption and a lack of public trust, this combination of morality and leadership offers vital guidance to governance.

The Ramayana's mention of chaos in the *Ayodhyakanda* gives one of the most detailed ancient accounts of why legitimate authority based on dharma is crucial for social order. The differentdescriptions of life without a king i.e. decline of society and culture, the destruction of institutions, economic collapse, and the rise of *Matsya-Nyaya* serve as a strong warningagainst idealistic views of revolutions. Current governance issues in the Indian subcontinent highlight the ongoing relevance of these warnings.

The governance system lies in Ramayana, including deliberative Sabhas with ministerial councils and popular representatives, shows ancient principles of inclusive governance that are often ignored in the modern times by simply saying it as a mythology, But The presence of women in assemblies and acceptance of an opposition voice suggest that the Ramayana envisioned governance based on dialogue rather than dictatorship.

Mahatma Gandhi's interpretation of *Ram-Rajya* as a vision for independent India translates the Ramayana's political ideas into ademocratic concept. It focuses decentralization, moral change, and dharmic decentralized authority over the centralized authority. This vision continues to inspire the many movements for grassroots democracy and politics based on ethics.As India and Indian subcontinent facing the modern challenges like rapid change, coup inequality, and social cohesion, the wisdom of the Ramayana shows more significant in todays time. It teaches that a lasting political order should be built on ethical actions. It also stresses that governance must create spaces for discussion and representation and that the ultimate aim of politics is to promote righteousness and the welfare of all and not to fulfil some hollow agendas. Though the epic does not offer strict blueprint of governance but provides a framework for thinking about governance ethically. It reminds us that politics is a moral effort that requires wisdom, compassion, and a firm commitment to truth and justice.

[24]Valmiki. (1960). Valmiki Ramayana (Vol. V, Sarga 90, Verse 63). Baroda: Oriental Institute.

[25]Valmiki. (1960). Valmiki Ramayana (Vol. V, Sarga 100, Verse 32-39). Baroda: Oriental Institute

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