



Exploring The Shifting Terrain Of Indian Mythology: Analyzing Amish Tripathi's Ramchandra Series (2015-19)

Himani Saxena

Student

Amity Institute of English Studies and Research

Abstract

The present paper seeks to investigate the nuances of the Ramayana and suggests a comparison with contemporary renditions, represented in mythological fiction novel series by Amish Tripathi in Ram Chandra series and a translation into English by C.Rajagopalachari, as well as several adaptations presented in the form of cartoon animation, TV, and movies. This work is conducted by qualitative comparative analysis that reveals changes in ancient aspects, such as the image of the hero, his appearance, and personality, change of plot, new characters, or event additions. The paper is supposed to analyze the degree of correlation and discrepancy between the 1973 original epic and its adaptation to determine which events, many pieces of information, and characters have remained or not. Moreover, the paper emphasizes the necessity of familiarity with the original epic for the grasping the essence of Hindu dharma and how the fictional retellings might corrupt the minds of young ones, excluding the meanings of original texts. By revealing the multi-layered nature of the characters and events of Ramayana, this paper reveals its modern relevance and metaphysical conclusions from the human predicament and spiritual destiny. Furthermore, the paper also described the application of mythology for people to understand their countries' beliefs, psychology, and rituals, compared to Greek mythology. Overall the paper aims to defamiliarize the complexity of the myths, and by that, better understand its cultural, ethical, and philosophical roots

Keywords: Ramayana, mythology, adaptation, cultural heritage.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Ramayana is the core of Hinduism and dharma; it is neither a biography nor a history. The Ramayan is revered in Hinduism as a sacred text that imparts profound intellectual and moral lessons to everyone starting at a young age. It symbolises the eternal struggle between righteousness (dharma) and unrighteousness (adharma), highlighting the importance of accountability, devotion, and morality in one's journey through life. A vast tapestry

of cosmic symbols, celestial beings, and epic adventures may be found in the Ramayana. It serves as a timeless tale that transcends everyday existence to offer a figurative comprehension of the human condition and the never-ending quest of higher spiritual goals. The complex characters and events in the Ramayana represent archetypal characteristics that endure across time and national boundaries.

In the same way that understanding Zeus, Hades, Poseidon, Athena, and Hera is necessary to comprehend Greek culture and its people, understanding these epics is essential to understanding Hindu dharma. One must also be aware of the dignity, tolerance, and patience of Ram, the self-sacrifice, loyalty, and commitment of Sita, the wisdom and knowledge of Ravan, the kinship of Lakshman and the devotion of Hanuman.

II. DISPARITIES BETWEEN SCION OF IKSHVAKU AND RAMAYANA

The novel begins in the middle of the 14 year vanvas (exile) where Raam is seen to be aiming to hunt a deer and remember his guru (teacher) who taught him to use a bow and arrow, to correctly use and master the art. The teacher he recalls who taught him was sage Vashishtha. But in Ramayan his shastrakala (art of war, usage of weapons) was taught by Sage Vishwamitra who was blessed with divine arrows and mastered every weapon by the boon of Lord Shiv after performing rigorous tapas. He gave sage Vishwamitra all the weapons that were available to Devas, Rishis, Gandharvs, Demons and Yakshas.

Raam is seen to be hunting a deer in order to consume it. He states, “ Straying too far from the tributary rivers or other water bodies would mean losing out on the best chance of hunting animals. Ram and Lakshman were princes of Ayodhya, inheritors of the proud Kshatriya tradition of the Raghukul, the descendants of Raghu. They would not survive on a diet of herbs, fruit and leaves alone.” This makes reader think Raam a Kshatriya was mansahari (carnivorous) on the contrary in the Ramayana makes it very clear that Raam went to mata kakaye and told her he will be on a plant based diet throughout his 14 year of exile in the forest

Valmееke Ramayan Aranyakand: sarg19 :shlok 15 states

फलमूलाशनौ दान्तौ तापसौ ब्रह्मचारिणौ।

पुत्रौ दशरथस्यास्तां भ्रातरौ रामलक्ष्मणौ ॥ १५॥

'फल और मूल ही उनका भोजन है। वे जितेन्द्रिय, तपस्वी और ब्रह्मचारी हैं। दोनों ही राजा दशरथ के पुत्र और आपसमें भाई-भाई हैं। उनके नाम राम और लक्ष्मण हैं ॥ १५॥

Raam after killing the poor deer did not show much remorse and was rather relieved that they were not noticed by anyone which is contrary to his image that is of sweet and gentle man who cares a lot of other creatures. The language in the text is not reliable, a subtle change, Raam and his peeps use to speak in Awadhi language but we notice Lakshman addressing Raam as 'Dada' which means elder brother which is mostly spoken in Eastern part of India

Another major change we see in the storyline is the exclusion of golden deer, when Sita saw the golden deer she asked her husband Raam to get it for her and Lakshman stayed with her and so happened the Lakshman rekha crossing incident; when they heard the scream and lakshman had to leave but the mention of this scene itself is omitted instead it is shown that both the brother's went to hunt the deer for the meal. They see bodies of soldiers near the place they stayed but in the Ramayana, Ravan when came to abduct Sita he came alone.

In the novel Raavan is portrayed as a young trader, a merchant who provokes Dashrath by riling the trading deals between kubaer and Dashrath who is shown as an emperor of Sapt Sindhu, a region of present day punjab which is far way from Ayodhya, actual mentioned place of Raam. Dashrath again is shown as a short tempered ruler who looks down upon Vaishyas, the trader class and have a genuine dislike towards them. He shouts and scream on people and acts rudely, and is arrogant not very Royal on his side and totally opposite of how he actually was

portrayed in Ramayan. The most popular incident of the payasam offered by Devas after the yaaga performed by Dashrath and if we notice the order in which it was offered is contrary to the extent of biasness shown in the novel.

While the war in which Kaikeyi accompanied Dashrath was in the south between Indra (God) and Sambara of Vaijyanti (demon Timidhvaja), there is a description of a war that took place between Dashrath, the ruler of the Sapta Sindhu, and Kubaer, a trader, and his General, Raavan, from the island of Lanka. However, it is true that Dashrath passed out and Kaikeyi drove his chariot. The battle of Sambara's defeat, which aided King Divodasa, is recounted in the Ramayana and several other vedic hymns. "I shall tell you. Do not be impatient. You remember how your husband Dasaratha, long ago, fought against Sambara in the South? And you were with him, were you not? Your husband went, did he not, to help Indra? Sambara of Vaijayanti was too powerful for Indra, who sought Dasaratha's help. Did not Dasaratha get wounded in battle and lose consciousness? Then, you drove his chariot skilfully out of the battle-field, gently removed the arrows from his body and revived him and saved his life. Have you forgotten all this?"¹ This describes the battle that was fought and how King Dashrath was helped by Kaikeyi when he felt unconscious. An addition reference to Sage Vashishtha and his "bodyguards" is very ludicrous, given his formidable combat skills and his stick's ability to absorb any weapon or threat that stands in his way, as demonstrated in the famous face-off between Sage Vashishtha and Sage Vishwamitra.

The usage of the term "India" by Vashishta during a time when it was non-existent. The timing of Raam's birth is manipulated in the novel, with the Kaushalya's nurse Nilanjana and the astrologer deceiving the populace about how fortunate he will be for the kingdom as well as individuals. In the Ramayana, Raam's birth was celebrated and regarded as a blessing; however, in the novel, he was born on the same day that Dashrath lost his first battle, saying, "Dashrath was defeated and Ram was born." In a way meaning that it was because of Raam that Dashrath lost his battle, which also shows the psyche of the people how fickle minded they are. Dashrath and the people of Ayodhya view Raam as unlucky, and he holds Raam responsible for the battle he lost due to his own incompetence. No strange reference is made to the birth of other brothers, such as in the Ramayan, where it is said that their mothers consumed payasam in a order to conceive them. The time line is distorted, the time when Raam accompanies Sage Vishwamitra and when the four brothers go to Sage Vashishtha's gurukul is varied from the original myth. Dashrath is said to lose his liveliness six years after the battle in the novel, "Parchment-like skin stretched thinly over a face that was worn out by grief, his eyes sunken, his hair grey. The grievous battle wound on his leg had long since turned into a permanent deformity, depriving him of the hunting and exercising that he so loved. Seeking refuge in drink, his bent body gave little indication of the strong and handsome warrior he'd once been." Which is again different from the actual legend.

The dynamics of the community in the novel are very different from the Dwapar yug that we actually know; the society in the novel seems extremely present and contemporary, whereas Dwapar yug was different. The author has additionally addressed the male and feminine ways of living, as well as the many ways that various rulers choose to rule—a topic that is never touched upon. Characters in the Amish myth have different personalities from those in the original tale. While Bharat was compassionate and devoted to his brother, he is also shown to be impulsive, impolite, freewheeling, cynical, and emotional. Above all, Bharat is a born rebel who wears his heart on his sleeves. The storyline and social dynamics of Kalyug are borrowed from Dwapar yug; Ram is overly idealistic and thinks that law should be the answer to all issues, but Bharat is grounded in reality and believes that a king should be able to establish a system that will take advantage of people's inherent selfishness to benefit society as a whole. Bharat is shown to be having a 'girlfriend', and is in his fifth relationship, the character is not just have kalyug characteristics but is very modern day character. He is of the age of sixteen and is in a relationship with a woman older than him, the dynamics which has always been looked down upon, for the woman to be older than the man and is also of another clan. He is portrayed as a fierce believer of freedom and feminine way of life as guru Vashishtha explained. He seems to believe that by giving people freedom they will find their own right path that people are not obedient enough to follow the masculine way for too long.

¹ Ramayan 1958, chapter XIII, page 53-54

III. IMPORTANCE OF DISCLAIMER

People who are unaware of the original story are misled by mythological fiction that is created without the appropriate disclaimers and warning that it is entirely fiction and not at all like the true myth. The original myth may be lost in translation. Perhaps if 2% of readers accept the information as factual, this is still cause for concern since it could fuel the spread of false information and perhaps inspire a new version of the story that will gain traction and be believed by readers. Mythological fiction has the ability to mislead people who are not familiar with the true story when it does not clearly state that it is fiction and deviates greatly from the original myth. Misinterpretations may arise, and if even a small percentage of individuals believe the fictionalized version is true, it can contribute to the spread of misinformation. This distortion could lead to the emergence of alternative retellings, perpetuating a cycle of misinformation and potentially altering people's perceptions of the genuine myth. It underscores the importance of distinguishing between fictional reinterpretations and the actual cultural or mythological narratives.

Furthermore, the impact of such misinformation extends beyond individual beliefs. It can influence cultural understanding and contribute to the formation of alternate narratives that deviate from historical or cultural truths. As these fictionalized versions gain traction, they may overshadow the rich cultural heritage embedded in the original myths. The potential for false information to sway public opinion emphasises the producers' obligation to include explicit disclaimers and raise awareness of the difference between legitimate cultural tales and imaginative storytelling. In this manner, we may stop inaccuracies from spreading unintentionally and maintain the authenticity of cultural heritage. Irregular mythic fiction can also dilute cultural subtleties and even erode historical relevance, among other negative consequences. Representations of authentic myths in fictional narratives might obscure their deeper meanings and reflections of societal values. This mismatch blurs the substance of traditional tales through fictitious retellings, which not only affects cultural comprehension but may also be a factor in the generational divide.

CONCLUSION

Confusion and the propagation of false information can result from stories that drastically change, either in storyline or character, or when they add scientific elements. By changing the content, it's possible to mislead viewers about the actual nature of the subject matter or distort the original meaning. Further confounding comprehending and feeding false information are divergent interpretations brought forth by tale variances.

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