



Application Of Archaic Statesmanship In Contemporary Period As Depicted In The Trilogy By Amish Tripathi

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Abstract:

Myths are a rich source of moral foundation and not just ancient stories based on the early history of a group of people. Wisdom and actions of archaic men depicted in myths set multiple examples for the present. The essential statesmanship attributes of the mythological figures in human form hold a functional equivalency in the contemporary period. The retelling of Ramayana, one of the epics of India, by Amish depicts a number of situations that are handled tactfully by the mythological characters and these acts of statesmanship can be measured as essential attributes required by any successful statesman even today. Most importantly, Amish's trilogy belongs to the genre of popular fiction and the language is simple. Such works are often taken as reading for pleasure. The paper aims to show how reading of retellings is not just confined to pleasure but it has a wider scope.

Key words Statesmanship, archaic, relevance, retellings, moral-foundation, contemporary men

Introduction

According to Merriam-Webster, "Mythology is an allegorical narrative or a body of myths dealing with gods, demigods and legendary heroes of a particular people." This definition aptly explains myths as allegorical narratives with some moral based lesson and not just any usual tale for entertainment. Myths have educational value. The strategies that mythical heroes followed in past provide fine examples for individuals in contemporary period. Their wisdom and actions in myths can be adopted by rulers or statesmen even today. With the popular fiction flooding in market, it is an apparent phase of evolved mythological literature in which majority of people are spending time in reading retellings that are written in simple

language. Modern men often try to seek a scientific explanation for everything and for them these retellings may seem as a source of entertainment. Man does not realize that his own past has an explanation to many truths and his quest for knowledge and strategic learning can only end “when one understands it’s spiritual –historical past.” (Cassirer: 1979.61) and it is through myths readers revisit the past. Undoubtedly, even history witnesses events and provides a record of men who were great emperors, conquerors and good administrators in past but history doesn’t relate their life stories in detail. It may chronologically enlist events with their evidences, but it doesn’t depict life lead by typical men or women (characters) of that age. Myths talk about life lead by archaic men and today even if life has evolved a lot, men do possess certain similar emotions like love, hatred, revenge. Mythological literature provides such symbols and signs that urge men to think and act alike. Cassirer in *The philosophy of symbolic forms* states that thoughts of a person depends more on the “system of signs” (1957.45) than on the reality. Literature in myths doesn’t convey direct messages that compel men into actions. The indirect messages appear as sign and symbols that provide some ways of conduct to readers or listeners. Retellings have been successfully accepted by readers and myths are being retold in different forms like in graphic presentation, films adaptation especially the animated movies based on mythological characters or novels of popular genre written entirely with a fresh perspective. Furthermore, youth have an urge to win and get the most and they usually have some idols whom they prefer following. These idols create a space in the mind of their observers and when they act like these men, others can see a reflection of those legendary heroes in them. Marta Ancarani in his work *The return of the mythical hero* asserts that whatever actions man undertake have value not because of their own reality, but because they participate in a reality that transcends them. (2010.16). These examples make readers follow some principles that have already been utilized successfully by the mythological characters and when these principles are followed by anyone, even the men around them can relate some actions of the individual with those mythical heroes/idols who are known for their specific tasks .

Adaptation of films based on myths has also influenced the mind of individuals. David L. Emerson affirms that the myths in the form of films are like “the manifestations of what Joseph Campbell called the Hero’s journey.” (2019. 265) Children can see themselves in these mythic characters but in case of a young man, symbols from novel can leave better messages as these symbols are in the form of indirect messages and the intricacies of life depicted in tales can be understood only if someone has witnessed multiple circumstances in life and have some maturity for understanding. The young career oriented readers of popular fiction may see them in context to the real life, and so this ultimately can create better idols and role models. The Indian author, Amish’s *Ram Chandra Trilogy* is based on Rama, the Indian deity and Sita , his female counterpart ,and Raavana ,King of Srilanka. It is a popular fiction in which the author has depicted statesmanship of mythical characters with an aim to interpret the philosophy that makes this myth look afresh and also bring on the table the

wholesomeness of the principles and strategies that lie rooted in its actions of the mythical heroes. Amish believes that, “We are the only country that has such a rich heritage but we do not want to learn anything from it.” (2017) Thus, his aim primarily is to bring awareness with his way of depiction which is in sync with the present time.

Discussion

Andrew Lang in his study *Myth, ritual and religion* talked about two elements in myths ;one that is rational and accepted by all and the other that is irrational which holds no relevance(1887.5) ,and any irrational element that has been explained by a philosopher through a logical theory ,has been accepted as a rational aspect in a myth .Lang’s study supports the fact that one should not keep finding out the truth contained in or related to a myth .Myths are very useful if the feasibility of occurrences is taken into consideration for life messages .Any myth even in its evolved phase would not be taken seriously by people today unless depicted in such a manner that relates to an individual’s life processes .Amish’s through the *Ram Chandra Trilogy* that comprises myths of Lord Rama, the Indian deity and his wife , Sita along with the depiction of Ravana ,King of Srilanka depicts past with a new perspective in which the mythical characters have their own human identities .These lifelike characters are characters that depict life as it is and their mannerism depict humans in past. Like in *Raavana: Enemy of Aryavarta* (2019) Raavana and Kumbhakaran, Raavana’s brother are born with a curse as Nagas. The author’s interpretation doesn’t make the irrational element pertaining to these mythical characters appear magical or supernatural. It’s projected as a deformity. Some of the researchers have also given logical explanation on deformity. Mike Bradley explains in his remarkable study *Overcoming the curse on humanity* that “Advances in science and technology offer insights that sometimes reveal trickles of hope but at the same times reveal gobs of despair.”(2013.21)His study explains the fact if there is disease, we have a cure and similarly if we have perfection, we also have deformity. The deformed bodies of Ravana , with an outgrowth from his naval ,and Kumbaran, with a monstrous size, is acceptable and the present reader does not take it as something which could reflect irrational element . Similarly, in *Ram Scion of Ikshvaku* (2015) and *Sita Warrior of Mithila* (2017) myths have been depicted keeping in mind the present perspective. The reference of Jatayu as nagas doesn’t raise an eye of disbelief due to the element of supernatural or magic in it .Furthermore , the technology emphasized in the making of Pushpak vimaan “which was basic, sparse and efficient ...more of a military vehicle” (Amish:2017.357) is in sync with the present times .The reference of Vishnu in human form as the defender for humanity is acceptable , Sita or Rama, the characters from the myth of Ramayana have been addressed as Vishnu .The word Vishnu has been associated with the defender of truth and savior of people. These characters do not possess anything magical or unbelievable in traits or powers, they are humans who have their own strength and weaknesses and an individual of today can correlate oneself with these characters.

Further, Campbell in *The power of myth* talked about two deeds that are told through myths. If one type is based on a courageous act of an individual i.e. “the hero” in which his actions exhibit his performance in a battle or the way he protects somebody’s life, the other myth is based on some spiritual deed through which a hero experiences “supernormal range of human spiritual life” and this itself serves as a moral or “a message”.(1991.152).The hero as defined by Campbell can fit in as a role model today, he can be any leader but the philosophy probable through the depiction of the characters in Amish’s retelling of Ramayana represents an embodiment of statesmanship that can also make a role model, the viewpoint embedded in his retellings on one side depicts “the hero of Campbell” who is heroic in his performance in battlefield .In addition to this, it also represents certain principles like right action at the right time, bringing past examples to the fore for overcoming shortcomings .The philosophy also reflects some workable strategies by considering several unconcerned and indirect factors minutely. The principle of right action at the right time has even been supported by Plato, as evidently substantiated in the statement keeping Plato’s view in mind that “the job of the statesman is to determine the right moment at which various arts –and in particular, the arts of generalship, rhetoric and judging-should be used (Bevir :2010.1061). An individual, especially a youth who is a student of ethics and politics would like to follow certain principles that would give them gains by applying right action at the right time and thus such messages provide learning from past in the form of situation handling .In the retelling of Ramayana by Amish, the mythical characters and their strategies are depicted in such a way that it brings history to present and an individual doesn’t feel that he is reading any old myth. The author in an interview stated that his work on mythology has never questioned the archaic truth and has always maintained its equivalency with the past scriptures that were mostly written in Sanskrit.(2017) The trilogy has been written in simple English language to provide prompt messages and the characters depiction is life like.

Now, if we consider some more views and definitions on statesman or statesmanship by some theorists and mythologists, it is obvious that past mythical characters formed the foundational traits on which a state can work successfully. According to Cambridge dictionary, a person or a leader can be given the status of a statesman who is an experienced politician, especially one who is respected for making good judgments. In *Sita Warrior of Mithila* (2017), Sita, the mythical character is not an experienced politician but is successful within no time because she knows how much important it is to learn from past mistakes and what strategies her elders followed to be successful in their endeavors. She therefore, keeps her mother’s experiences on high priority like she remembers to “Find partners you can trust; who are loyal cause.”(105) Ram in *Ram Scion of Ikshvaku* is also not an experienced King but his strict adherence to this belief that society needs laws that are followed and not broken ,made him win over his people . His philosophy of statecraft can be read in his reply to Bharat, his step brother in the following speech:

Freedom is never the ally of the law. You can have freedom to choose whether you want to join or leave a society based on rule of law. But so long as you live in such a society, you must obey the law.” (Amish: 2015. 73)

If there is some flexibility and laws keep changing, nobody will show seriousness in following such rules. Brian.Z. Tamanaha in *On the Rule of Law, History, Politics, Theory* affirms “If it is not already firmly in place, the rule of law appears mysteriously difficult to establish.”(2004:4) But there should also be a proper balance in the way of administration. Aristotle in his work, *Politics* points out that “the stability of a kingdom will depend upon the power of the King being kept with moderate bounds; for how much the less extensive his power is, by so much longer will his government continue”(2020). A similar philosophy is already in place in the myths of Sita in *Sita Warrior of Mithila* (2017) and Ram in *Ram Scion of Ikshvaku* (2015). They are not autocrats and know how their kingdom can flourish by promoting equality. Sita’s policy turns out to be successful because she not only thinks of Mithila in terms of trade for financial gains of the state but also in terms of improving the slum. Similarly, Ram is a symbolical representation for goodness to state and not just a self centered leader. Apart from this, for maintaining a long lasting hold ,one must maintain the twin principles of “ non violence and impulse control” as taught to the students at Gurukul, an archaic educational place .The mythical character ,Sita doesn’t resort to violence but uses a “forceful, strong, high pitched bellow”(Amish :2017.46) at the right moment, to leave a straight message that no one has a right to question her parentage and so we see that the principle of non violence is practiced but at the same time self respect plays a vital role for these mythical characters .Therefore, non-violence for them was not a display of weakness before others but a message that resorting to warfare or violence was not the only means to show others wrong or unacceptable. This philosophy is in sync with the thought of Vishwamitra, a great guru who addresses and explains the reasons for the decline of Bhaarat society to his students, specifically in reply to Sita’s responses at one of his session in the gurukul that the Bhaarat society appeared like “weak wimps to the brutal warriors abroad.”(Amish: 2017.62) Sita, the Princess of Mithila, also remembers to follow the same principle when a conspiracy is hatched against her as she is considered a threat to neighboring states. She doesn’t leave the matter unsolved, and she makes a close survey of the chariot on which she lost her balance and fell from it .She is able to make out that the wood of the chariot’s wheel was replaced by a similar but a weaker wood by someone intentionally.(135) She applies the right wisdom by analyzing the situation which is connected with her new position as a Princess of Mithila. She, who has taken the responsibility of an already weak empire, doesn’t resort to direct violence and thinks of controlling spy’s hold, “Sulochan, the prime minister of Sankashya”(Amish: 2017.137) who is the man behind her uncle Kushadhvaj’s plan of getting a control over Mithila.

Amish, the author of the trilogy has depicted a philosophy based on statecraft, "What is an ideal state?" The myth takes the readers to a life situation that puts a statesman into a state of dilemma and it is difficult for him to take decisions especially when the "rule of law" and "freedom" come into conflict with each other. Undoubtedly, Rama and Sita are able to maintain a balance between their personal lives while taking decisions for the state. Their decisions reflect some very important aspects of decision making by a statesman adopted in multiple situations. Their decisions are based on building up public confidence which ultimately sustains trust of people on them. According to one of the studies done on the political situations in the countries like U.S.A., U.K. and many European countries by Geoffrey Hosking shows that government is facing problem as it has lost public trust. It points out that a substantial minority in some countries or even the majority in some cases feels that the economy doesn't work for them and their problems are not even being acknowledged by the government. This study includes examples and situations from the west; it talks about public trust which forms the core of any successful government.

Conclusion

The study is an attempt to show how myths in evolved form can be useful to a young reader who might take up popular fiction reading for mere enjoyment but in this way also learn some tactics that a statesman should adopt for managing the state of affairs systematically. The work has tried to analyze past situation of strategic planning and administration that can be utilize even today especially by young minds. In this work some examples from the Ram Chandra Trilogy by Amish have been taken to substantiate such situations that can be applied.

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