Ramayana and international studies: Lessons from the past to the present

Vimal Nayan Pandey*

Real-politics can be explained excellently through the Ramayana, which could be a better source than Santzu's 'The Art of War' and Machiavelli's 'The Prince'. Western theories have been given a prominent place in international studies. As a result, only western sources were given a special place in the analysis of international relations. However, the reality is that many theories of international relations that are used today can be traced back to Valmiki's 'Ramayana', Ved Vyas's 'Mahabharata', Kautilya's 'Arthashastra', etc. (Pollock, 1993). Asian countries, particularly India, are gaining influence in the world system, and an Asian-centric analysis of the world system is becoming increasingly relevant. Theoretical importance of the Ramayana in the present world systemShri Jaishankar ji, the Foreign Minister of India, says that "the Monkey Army was organised by Lord Rama, which reflects today's alliance. With the help of the Ramayana, we can understand the geopolitics and power politics of that time (Bajpai, 2023).From an international perspective, the Ram-Bharat debate is extremely significant because it provides insight into the kind of personnel who should be assigned to gather secret information on sensitive subjects. Bharat was informed by Lord Ram that the messenger should always be knowledgeable, adept, alert, and focused, as well as discuss the matters at hand. During the search for Sita, Lord Ram and Lakshman disguised Hanuman before Lakshman; their diplomatic protocol and sending Angad as an emissary to Ravana's court reflect the role of envoy. When Vibhishan arrives to meet Ram Ji, his meeting with Lakshman first also reflects a diplomatic protocol. (Gajjar, 2023)The dialogue between Kumbhakarna and Ravana gives information about a just war. The Rajdharma and duties of a ruler explained to Ravana by Kumbhakarna are relevant even today for the peaceful functioning of the world order. He also advised Ravana that the king should always seek peace through alliance. Kumbhakarna also considered Ravana's not assessing the enemy army seriously a big mistake. (Mishra, 2023)Practical importance of the Ramayana in the present world systemThe Indian Prime Minister, Honourable Narendra Damodar Das Modi ji, believes that the Ramayana is the main source providing direction to Indian foreign policy. India imbibes the policy of tolerance and harmony from the Ramayana, which provides inspiration to maintain global peace (Amresh, 2020). Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, while referencing Ramayana at the time of Corona, said that Britain would end the COVID pandemic in the same way as Ram had ended Ravana. In a letter written to the Indian Prime Minister during the COVID pandemic, Brazilian President Bolsonaro also compared India's struggle against the pandemic with Sanjeevani Booti and Hanuman, while referencing the Ramayana. There is a lot of diversity in India, yet the harmonious feeling of the Ramayana is prevalent in every person in India. To strengthen this sentiment, the Indian government has planned to develop 15 places, which will be known as the Ramayana Circuit. This scheme is being implemented under the 'Swadesh Darshan Scheme' of the Ministry of Tourism."The countries of the south-east have special strategic importance for India. The Ramayana can be used as soft diplomacy to strengthen relations with these countries. "Ramayana Festival" is organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for cordial relations between

India and ASEAN countries. In the India-ASEAN Summit of 2018, Modi ji said that “Ramayana is an invaluable common heritage of India with ASEAN countries." In this regard, it was also proposed by the Government of India that a group of Ramayan countries should be formed. The project made for this should include experts from Indonesia, America, Britain, Russia,and Malaysia. To strengthen India's Act East Policy for the countries of the South-East, the Government of India has created a special Act East Department under the Government of Assam. There are 300 versions of the Ramayana all over the world, including India. Like Phra Lak Phra Ram in Laos, Ramkerti in Cambodia, Ramkiyan in Thailand, etc. So many types of Ramayana demonstrate the intensity of India’s historical relationship with these countries. When Buddhism arrived in Cambodia, Ram Ji was presented as a Bodhisattva. In this way, the south-eastern countries have assimilated the Ramayana according to their legal traditions. Ramkiyan is considered the national text in Thailand. In the 18th century, there was the rule of the Ayuththaya Kingdom, whose descendants ruled in the name of Rama; the name of the The corresponding king was Rama Dasham. On the Java island of Indonesia, Ramayana is an integral part of their culture.There is influence of Ramayana even in a country like Japan. An animated film on the theme of the Ramayana has been made by Japanese filmmaker Yugo Sakoke. The film Monkey King was made by Chinese filmmaker Sun Wukong with reference to Hanuman, an important character in the Ramayana. Thus, the Ramayana plays an important role in maintaining India's relations with countries through soft diplomacy.Modi’s visit to South Korea in 2015 brought new progress in relations between India and South Korea. The report presented during this tour proved that Queen Suriratna of South Korea was the wife of Korean King Suro. She went to Korea from Ayodhya in the first century BC. For this reason, many Koreans visit Ayodhya every year because they believe that their ancestors are related to Ayodhya.Ram-Setu between India and Sri Lanka is the common heritage of both the countries. Ravana satellite was launched by Sri Lanka in 2019. We know that Ravana is the main character of the Ramayana. There has been talk of connecting Ayodhya and Janakpur under the Sister City agreement between India and Nepal in 2014.Valmiki Ramayana is a major epic. Its social and cultural impact is found not only in Indian society but also in the countries of the south and south-east. The essence of all the elements of the modern world system, like statecraft, good governance, the intelligence system, diplomacy, the morality of war, statecraft, statesmanship, etc., are contained in the Ramayana. In some episodes of the Ramayana, like the Ram-Bharat dialogue and the Ravana-Kumbhkaran dialogue, the art of governance, messenger system, and morality of war are clearly demonstrated. In the present world system, the Ramayana is the main medium of soft diplomacy. It is mandatory for all countries to assimilate the concept of Ramayana to establish world peace.

References:

Amresh, P. (2020). The Ramayana Diplomacy: Enhancing The Soft Power of India . The Diplomatist , 17-23.

Bajpai, R. D. (2023). Ramayana: The indian Epic and Its Relevance to Global IR. E -International Relations, 15-20.

Bisht, Medha. (20190. Kautilya's Arthashastra: Philosophy of Strategy. New York and London: Routledge.

Gajjar, D. (2023, march 29). the geostrata independent youth led think tank . Retrieved february20,2023,from https://www.thegeostrata.com/post/what-the-ramayanateachesusaboutgeopolitics#:~:text=However%2C%20the%20story%20of%20the,in%20the%20Mahabharata%20and%20Ramayana
.

Mishra, V. K. (2023, July 23). Book Review: Strategic Culture in Ramayana. The Organiser .

Pollock, S. (1993). Ramayana and Political Imagination in India. The Journal of Asian Studies , 261-297.

Shahi, Deepshikha.(2018). Kautilya and Non-Western IR Theory. Cham: Springer.

***Dr. Vimal Nayan Pandey teaches at the Department of Political Science, Deshbandhu College, University of Delhi.**