

# 18

## Dasharatha's Eight Ministers: Analysing the Qualities of Ministers in State Administration – A Socio-Legal Perspective

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### Abstract

A model kingdom in all the three worlds situated in the province of Ayodhya, was ruled and governed by the King Dashrath, a descendant of Ikshvaku and father of the Maryada Purushottam Rama, along with his eight council of ministers, according to the Kshatriya shastra as given in Dharma shastra and not as per his whim and fancies. Following the rule of law or Dharma, i.e., 'Righteousness', in State Administration was the primary duty of these ministers for the welfare of the King and Kingdom.

The study delves into the intriguing historical narrative of King Dasharatha's reign, focusing on his eight trusted ministers who played a pivotal role in the administration of the state of Ayodhya. Through a socio-legal lens, this research examines the qualities, roles and

contributions of these ministers, shedding light on their significance in shaping the governance and legal framework of their time.

Incorporating historical texts, scriptures and literary sources, this analysis identifies the key qualities that defined these ministers and evaluates how these qualities impacted state administration. The socio-legal perspective explores the ethical, moral and legal aspects of their roles, emphasising the importance of character, integrity and knowledge in governance.

This study not only serves as a historical exploration but also offers valuable insights for contemporary state administration and governance. By drawing parallels between the qualities of Dasharatha's ministers and the requirements of modern political leaders and administrators, it offers a fresh

perspective on the enduring principles of effective governance.

Through a comprehensive examination of Dasharatha's eight ministers, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between leadership qualities, state administration and legal principles, providing a bridge

between ancient wisdom and contemporary governance practices.

**Key Words:** Dasharatha's Eight Ministers, State Administration, Principles of Governance, Rule of Law, Contemporary World, Democracy.

## Introduction

तस्यामात्या गुणैरासन्निष्वाकोस्तु महात्मनः।  
मंत्रज्ञाश्चेज्जितज्ञाश्च नित्यं प्रियदिते रताः॥  
अष्टौ बभूवुर्वीरस्य तस्यामात्या यशस्विनः।  
शुचयश्चानुरक्ताश्च राजकृत्येषु नित्यशः ॥<sup>1</sup>

**Meaning:** The glorious King Dasharatha is referred to as a great soul of the Ikshvaku dynasty, who had eight ministers in his reign. These eight ministers had the qualities that touched the epitome of knowledge and wisdom, who were clean and pure at heart, always obliged and involved in the welfare activities of the king and kingdom with their tactful skills all the time.

In the rich tapestry of ancient Indian history, the reign of King Dasharatha stands as a prominent chapter. This illustrious ruler of the Ikshvaku dynasty is celebrated not only for his valour in battle but also for his wise and astute governance. At the heart of his reign were his eight trusted ministers, whose counsel and expertise were invaluable in maintaining law, order and prosperity within his kingdom.

These eight ministers were not mere advisors; they were the pillars of Dasharatha's administration, each

bringing a unique set of skills and wisdom to the royal court. Their collective knowledge and unwavering dedication played a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of Ayodhya, the capital city of Dasharatha's kingdom.

This introduction sets the stage for a closer examination of Dasharatha's eight ministers, delving into their roles, contributions and the legacy they left behind in the annals of Indian history. Through their stories, we gain insight into the complexities of governance in a bygone era and into how the wisdom of these eight individuals helped to steer a kingdom towards prosperity and harmony and its relevance to modern democracy.

## Unveiling the Illustrious Eight: Identifying Dasharatha's Trusted Ministers in the Ramayana

Dasharatha's reign consisted of eight famous ministers who were devoted towards the king and kingdom and the family priests, namely sage Vasistha and sage Vamadeva, and some other counsellors who were part of Dasharatha's ministry. These eight ministers of Dasharatha's reign played

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.valmikiramayana.net/utf8/baala/sarga7/bala\\_7\\_frame.htm](https://www.valmikiramayana.net/utf8/baala/sarga7/bala_7_frame.htm)

pivotal roles in advising and assisting the king in governing his kingdom of Ayodhya. These ministers were renowned for their wisdom, loyalty and expertise in various fields. Here is an overview of Dasharatha's Eight Ministers:

धृष्टिर्जयन्तो विजयो सुराष्ट्रो राष्ट्रवर्धनः।

अकोपो धर्मपालश्च सुमंत्रश्चाष्टमोऽभवत्॥<sup>2</sup>

**Meaning:** Drishti, Jayantha, Vijaya, Saurashtra, Raashtravardhana, Akopa, Dharmapaala, are seven, and Sumantra is the eighth one.

सुवाससः सुवेषाश्च ते च सर्वे शुचिव्रताः।

हितार्थं च नरेन्द्रस्य जाग्रतो नयचक्षुषा॥<sup>3</sup>

**Meaning:** The ministers were well-dressed and wore the best ornaments in the form of observing vows and serving the king with decency and truthfulness, keeping an eye of policy open in the interest of the monarch.

The brief summary of the qualities of the ministers: These Eight Ministers who served the reign from father to son, were "proficient in Shastras and sciences, they had knowledge of every branch of study and shied away from all acts of injustice. Famed, eminent, wealthy and with well-restrained senses, their deeds matched their words, their decisions were never

made in haste, but after much contemplation. Peerless and forgiving, they always spoke with a smile. Nothing took place at home or abroad that they had no knowledge of; secret agents kept them informed of events already accomplished, actually happening or merely contemplated. Adept at their duties, so loyal they were that if an occasion demanded it, they would not spare even their own sons. Engaged in replenishing the royal coffers and maintaining an army, they would not harm even an enemy if he had done no wrong. Mighty and powerful, they were exemplary statesmen and protectors of the realm and its people. While discharging their duties, they did not cause injury to the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Punishment was meted out only after considering the gravity of a man's offense. When those honest and illustrious men sat in judgment, there was not a single man in the kingdom who dared to bear false witness.

Ever vigilant and alert to the welfare of the king, the judicious and discerning ministers of exemplary statesmanship were of impeccable conduct. They wore

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> [https://valmikiramayana.net/Artf8/bala/sarga7/bala\\_7\\_frame.htm](https://valmikiramayana.net/Artf8/bala/sarga7/bala_7_frame.htm)

fine garments and ornaments; known for their courtesy, resoluteness, boundless bravery and heroism, they made flawless and wise decisions, for which they were reputed even outside the country. They always conversed kindly and pleasingly. Ever watchful through the secret agents, rewarding his subjects according to their virtues, Dasaratha found no enemy to be his equal, much less, superior to him! Enemies were suppressed, the tributary kings were loyal, all was peaceful and Ayodhya basked in serenity. Blessed with many friends, surrounded by a host of supremely capable counselors, Dasaratha, like the rising sun with its brilliant rays, ruled the earth gloriously like Indra ruled the heavens."<sup>4</sup>

These Eight Ministers collectively formed the core council of advisors to King Dasharatha in the Ramayana. They were instrumental in shaping the events of the epic, offering their wisdom and guidance in times of peace and crisis both. Their loyalty and dedication to their king and kingdom were integral to the narrative of the Ramayana. All these counsellors and the sages together made the state of Ayodhya a virtuous and blameless city.

People were satisfied, they had no greed, no lust, and no liar could be found in the city. A heaven on earth!

### **Historical and Mythological Context:**

#### **Ancient India**

The Ramayana is an ancient Indian epic, traditionally believed to have been composed by sage Valmiki around 500 BCE to 100 BCE. However, the events it describes are thought to date back much earlier, possibly to the Treta Yuga, a mythical age in Hindu cosmology. The story unfolds in the region of modern-day India and Sri Lanka, with Ayodhya as the primary setting.

#### **Dasharatha's reign**

Dasharatha was a legendary king of Ayodhya, a prominent city-state in ancient India. His reign is often associated with the period of prosperity and just governance. He was part of the Ikshvaku dynasty, also known as the Solar dynasty, which traced its lineage back to Lord Rama himself.

#### **Hindu mythology**

The Ramayana is a foundational text in Hindu mythology and literature. It belongs to the genre of ancient Indian

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.valmiki.iitk.ac.in/summary?field\\_kanda\\_tid=1&field\\_sarga\\_value=7](https://www.valmiki.iitk.ac.in/summary?field_kanda_tid=1&field_sarga_value=7)

epics, alongside the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Hinduism, the religion of the majority of Indians, incorporates various mythological stories and legends as part of its religious and cultural heritage. The Ramayana, in particular, has had a profound influence on Hindu beliefs and practices.

### **Divine incarnations**

The Ramayana narrates the life and adventures of Lord Rama, considered the seventh avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu, one of the principal deities in Hinduism. Rama is revered as an embodiment of dharma (righteousness) and a role model for ethical living.

### **Themes and morality**

The epic explores essential themes such as duty (dharma), virtue, loyalty, family and the eternal struggle between good and evil. It serves as a moral guide and source of spiritual inspiration for Hindus.

### **Religious significance**

The Ramayana holds immense religious significance for Hinduism and it is recited, performed and celebrated across India during festivals and religious ceremonies. It has also influenced art, music, dance and literature throughout the Indian subcontinent for centuries.

Dasharatha's reign and the Ramayana are

deeply embedded in the historical, cultural and religious fabric of ancient India. The epic not only narrates the heroic journey of Lord Rama but also imparts profound philosophical and ethical teachings that continue to resonate with millions of people to this day.

### **Qualities and Characteristics of Ministers: A Socio-Legal Perspective**

In Dasharatha's time, the qualities and characteristics expected of ministers were influenced by the socio-legal norms of that era, which were deeply rooted in ancient Indian culture and governance principles. Here, we will analyse these qualities and how they aligned with the socio-legal norms of the time:

#### **I. Wisdom and Knowledge**

- **Expected qualities:** Ministers were expected to possess wisdom and knowledge in various fields, including politics, governance, ethics and spirituality. They needed to offer sound advice to the king.
- **Alignment with socio-legal norms:** In ancient India, knowledge and wisdom were highly revered and they played a crucial role in decision-making. Ministers were often scholars, well-versed in scriptures, philosophy and statecraft, reflecting

the value placed on intellectual prowess.

## 2. Loyalty and Devotion

- **Expected qualities:** Loyalty to the king and unwavering devotion to the welfare of the kingdom were paramount. Ministers were expected to put the interests of the state above personal ambitions.
- **Alignment with socio-legal norms:** Loyalty to the king was a cornerstone of ancient Indian governance. The concept of "dharma" emphasised duty and loyalty as essential virtues and ministers were held to high standards of integrity and commitment to the throne.

## 3. Ethical Conduct

- **Expected qualities:** Ministers were expected to uphold ethical and moral standards. They were to set an example for the rest of the kingdom by leading virtuous lives.
- **Alignment with socio-legal norms:** Ethical conduct was central to the socio-legal norms of ancient India. Concepts like "dharma" and "righteousness" guided the behaviour of individuals, including ministers. Violation of ethics was viewed as detrimental to the well-being of the

state.

## 4. Administrative Competence

- **Expected qualities:** Ministers were required to be skilled administrators who could efficiently manage the affairs of the kingdom, ensure justice and maintain law and order.
- **Alignment with socio-legal norms:** Effective administration was a key aspect of governance in ancient India. The socio-legal norms emphasised the importance of a well-organised and just administration to ensure the welfare of the people.

## 5. Spiritual and Ritual Expertise

- **Expected qualities:** Some ministers were expected to have knowledge of spirituality, rituals and omens to guide the king and interpret divine signs.
- **Alignment with socio-legal norms:** Spirituality and rituals were integral to ancient Indian society. The presence of such ministers aligned with the religious and cultural norms of the time as they facilitated the connection between the kingdom and the divine.

## 6. Military and Strategic Acumen

- **Expected qualities:** In a time when kingdoms faced external threats and conflicts, ministers with military expertise were essential to ensure the

kingdom's defence and security.

- **Alignment with socio-legal norms:**  
The ability to protect the kingdom from external threats was a fundamental duty of the state. Military acumen and strategic planning were valued skills, reflecting the need to maintain peace and order.

Therefore, the qualities and characteristics expected of ministers in Dasharatha's time aligned closely with the socio-legal norms of that era. These norms emphasised wisdom, loyalty, ethical conduct, administrative competence and a deep connection to spirituality as essential qualities for those in positions of power and authority. These ministers played a crucial role in upholding the values and governance principles of ancient India.

#### **Ministerial Evolution: A Comparative Analysis of Principles followed in Dasharatha's Era and Modern Democracies**

The qualities of Dasharatha's ministers have a significance in modern democracy that teaches good governance of State, i.e., maintenance of law and order and a

just society, to the State Ministers. The principles followed by these eight ministers in the state administration is an exemplary epitome in the modern world, literally. Though Dasharatha's reign was a monarchy government, it had a welfarist approach towards its people. The modern democratic theory literally aims to work on similar principles of the welfare state as that of the Ramayana era.

The principles of good governance were qualities imbibed into the spirit of these ministers who were free from all the vices arising out of desire and anger. In any era of state administration including the modern democracy, the state administrator must be free from the vices arising out of desire and anger per se. All the state administration activities were according to the 'Dharma'; nobody was above Dharma, not even the king or his ministers. The rule of law was equally applicable to all, irrespective of the position held by any individual. The essence of the rule of law is found u/A. 14 of the Constitution of India.<sup>5</sup> Dasharatha's eight ministers' qualities are found either in the legal text or in the social norm. The following comparative analysis of these

<sup>5</sup> The Constitution of India

qualities or principles will enhance the deeper understanding of the qualities of ministers in state administration in the contemporary world.

1. **Value as an ornament:** The ministers wore the ethical, moral and legal principles as an ornament in their conduct and behaviour. They always wore a smile even in times of great difficulties and held these values in their spirit and soul and were flawless.
2. **Efficient administration:** To maintain law and order in the society, the ministers would even impose punishment on their own sons if they were wrongdoers. It is so prevalent in today's Criminal Justice System of India; the enforcement agency shall punish the wrongdoer even if it turns out to be their own loved one.
3. **Corruption-free government and governance:** The ministers were dutiful and were never involved in any act of bribery in any form, as they were free from vice arising out desire or anger. The Government aims to achieve this principle and has enacted laws. "The Prevention of Corruption

Act, 1988" in India and United Nation Convention Against Corruption are tools to fight against the global problem of corruption. They aim to prevent and combat corruption that exists in different forms such as bribery, abuse of function and so on.<sup>6</sup>

4. **Punishment:** The ministers would inflict punishment on the wrongdoers according to the committed offenses or crimes. In modern democracy, the same principle is followed by the Judiciary while sentencing. No punishment is inflicted more than appropriate to the crime. For example, when a murder is committed, it is a serious offense, the punishment of life imprisonment may be inflicted but for an offense of theft, the punishment is imprisonment of three years (S.379).<sup>7</sup>
5. **No ill-will towards the enemy when innocent:** The ministers will never cherish any ill-will, even towards their enemies if they are innocent. They would neither do wrong nor could accept any wrong

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/tools\\_and\\_publications/UN-convention-against-corruption.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/tools_and_publications/UN-convention-against-corruption.html)

<sup>7</sup> S.379, Indian Penal Code.

done even to their enemies. These high morals made them stand out in the history of the Ramayana. The innocent must not be punished. The Geneva Convention, 1949<sup>8</sup>, has many provisions where it prohibits any ill treatment of enemies if they are innocent, for example, the civilians of an enemy country.

6. **No unnecessary punishment to the innocent:** The ministers, in following their duty had ensured that no innocent is punished and without any cause. This age-old principle is very much relevant in modern democracy. The maxim "*That it is better 100 guilty Persons should escape than that one innocent Person should suffer*"<sup>9</sup> is one of the fundamental principles of Criminal Law; the courts in India follow it and do not punish any person whose guilt is not proved in the court of law.
7. **Protection to law-abiding citizens:** The ministers were always truthful towards the people and dutiful to protect the law-abiding people of Ayodhya. The State has enacted

various laws for the protection of those who follow law and certain remedies are provided to enforce rights, such as A.32 and A226, A227, writ petition to Supreme Court and High Court respectively.<sup>10</sup>

8. **Intel information:** The ministers were the best in their state administration in the city of Ayodhya; however they also ensured to have intel information of the provinces and their activities. This intel information was collected through spies and agents to secure the safety of the king and the kingdom. The concept of spies and agents is a part of the security policy of any country. Collecting information through spies is found even today to ensure the security and safety of a nation.

These qualities of Dasharatha's Ministers have an immense similarity with the contemporary world; however, these qualities were ingrained in their blood cells without any force and they made King Dasharatha shine like a Sun and they resembled the sun's surrounding

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm#:~:text=The%20Geneva%20Conventions%20and%20their%20Additional%20Protocols%20are,%28wounded%2C%20sick%20and%20shipwrecked%20troops%2C%20prisoners%20of%20war%29.>

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Franklin (1705-1790)

<sup>10</sup> The Constitution of India

rays. The Ramayana is interestingly relevant even in modern democracy

though the form of that government was monarchy.

### Conclusion

The subtle art of Dasharatha's Eight Ministers in state administration played a unique and vital role in the governance of Ayodhya, ensuring the kingdom's prosperity, security and adherence to ethical and spiritual principles. Together, they formed a council of advisors who guided King Dasharatha in his rule. These qualities were found in their soul; they were pure and clean at heart, highly intelligent and noble. Their flawless conduct made Dasharatha's administration shine forever and be a lesson to the world for flawless state administration, even after centuries.

In conclusion, our journey through the exploration of Dasharatha's eight ministers from the Ramayana, analysed from a socio-legal perspective, has provided valuable insights into the qualities and roles of ministers in state administration. We began by unveiling the illustrious eight individuals who held the trust of Dasharatha, each contributing uniquely to the governance of his kingdom.

Through our examination of the historical and mythological context, we gained a deeper understanding of the significance of Dasharatha's reign and the Ramayana in the broader cultural and political landscape. This context highlighted the enduring relevance of ancient texts in shaping our understanding of governance.

Delving into the qualities and characteristics of ministers, we found that principles such as loyalty, wisdom, integrity and dedication were not only valued in Dasharatha's era but continue to be essential attributes for effective leadership and governance in the modern world.

By exploring the roles and responsibilities of Dasharatha's eight ministers, we discovered that their duties encompassed various aspects of state administration, including diplomacy, law, justice, military strategy and economic management. These roles provide a rich source of inspiration for contemporary political thought.

In our comparative analysis of ministerial evolution, we juxtaposed the functions of Dasharatha's ministers with those in Indian modern democracy. While the contexts differ significantly, we observed that certain core principles of leadership and governance have remained consistent over time, suggesting the enduring nature of effective ministerial qualities.

Lastly, we discussed the lessons we can draw from Dasharatha's ministers, emphasising the timeless principles that can be applied to modern governance in India. The values of trustworthiness, accountability and ethical conduct, exemplified by these ancient ministers, serve as guiding beacons for contemporary leaders and policymakers.

In essence, the study of Dasharatha's eight ministers not only offers a fascinating glimpse into the past but also provides us with valuable insights and enduring principles that can continue to shape and inform the practice of state administration in India and beyond. As we navigate the complexities of modern governance, we can draw from the wisdom of the past to build a more just, efficient and accountable system for the benefit of all citizens.

