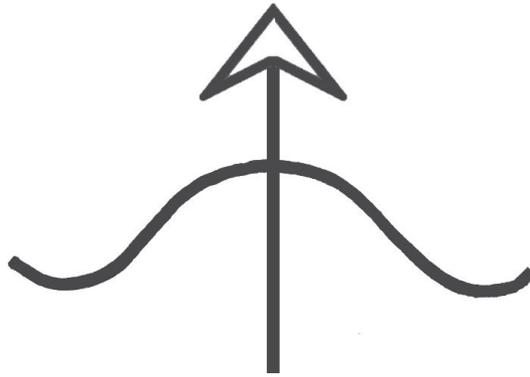


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THE RAMAYANA IN LITERATURE, SOCIETY AND THE ARTS
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Abstracts



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TRACING THE ANTIQUITY OF THE RAMAYANA – THROUGH THE INSCRIPTIONS, LITERATURE AND ART OF THE GUPTA PERIOD

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Of the two great Epics of India, the *Ramayana* occupies prime importance much beyond the religious ethos and cultural tradition of the land. It has moulded the very psyche of the Indian mind in such a way that every action revolves around it – consciously or unconsciously. Yet it has caused great controversy amongst scholars who hotly debate and question its historicity, antiquity and even authenticity. Almost every aspect of the great work has been put under the scanner in the last two centuries and sceptic minds have done their best to belittle the work, without success.

The present paper attempts to scientifically study the popularity of the *Ramayana* during the Gupta age as reflected in the literature, art and inscriptions of the period because it has a deep bearing on the antiquity of the epic and may convincingly lead us to an approximate date of its composition.

PLANT DIVERSITY IN THE VALMIKI RAMAYANA

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The ancient Sanskrit texts are a veritable treasure house of information on the botany of the ancient period. They reveal the deep ties that the ancients had with nature. Ancient Indians felt a deep sense of identity with nature and were aware of the ecological balance found in nature. In this context, Valmiki's *Ramayana* is the most important source of botanical information. It is very useful in clarifying the identity of various species of plants and also their importance. It contains an extensive list of plants and their specific geographical location. The epic covers a vast area from Ayodhya to Lanka and thus gives an accurate account of different landscapes, mountains, river basins, forests and so on. When the *Ramayana* was being written, there were thick forests in Naimisharanya, Chitrakoot, Dandakaranya and Panchavati. The Kishkindha kanda of the *Ramayana* discusses the geographical distribution, botanical wealth and forestry. Bala kanda also mentions the plants and forests of the region on the other side of the river Ganga, while the Aranya kanda describes the foliage of Sage Agasthya's hermitage; Panchavati represented a modified ecology with fruit-yielding and medicinal plants and the biodiversity of the Pampa lake area. The plants which are mentioned have economic value, besides being sacred and with a utilitarian purpose. In this paper, I have made an attempt to list out the plants mentioned in the *Ramayana* and their geographical distribution, the importance of the plants, the sacredness of the plants in general and some of the common plant species. With the help of the *slokas* of the *Ramayana*, we can identify specific species and the regions to which they belong, which will be a great boon in the writing of ancient Indian history.

Keywords: *Naimisharanya, Chitrakoot, Dandakaranya, Panchavati, hermitage, Forest types, flora, rivers and sanjeevani mountain, importance of the plants in religious, economical, social and as medicine.*

THE INFLUENCE OF RAMAYANA ON KALIDASA

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The *Ramayana* is the fountainhead of inspiration for poets and therefore it enjoys a unique position in the Indian literature. The prophecy of the Bala kanda (IV. 27) of the *Ramayana* that Valmiki would be a great refuge for poets is true:

ascaryamidamakhyanam munina samprakirtitam |
param kavinamadharam samaptam ca yathakramam ||

Valmiki is respectfully addressed as Adikavi; Kalidasa is called the Kavikula guru. Valmiki and Kalidasa are both great minds. If Valmiki has given us a grand epic of voluminous size, Kalidasa has given us works with a variety of themes, charming ideas and beautiful expressions.

The works of Kalidasa are: *Rtusamhara*, *Malavikagnimitra*, *Kumarasambhava*, *Vikramorvasiya*, *Raghuvamsa*, *Meghaduta* and *Abhijnana Sakuntala*, etc. Among these *Ramayana*'s influence on Kalidasa is very heavy on the *Raghuvamsa*, *Meghaduta*, *Abhijnana Sakuntala* and *Vikramorvasiya*.

The *Raghuvamsa* of Kalidasa is one of the most popular Mahakavyas. As the title itself shows, it deals with kings of the Raghu dynasty. Of all the works of Kalidasa, the *Raghuvamsa* is the one which has its source in *Ramayana*. The very title *Raghuvamsa* has been chosen from the *Ramayana* (I.3.9):

yatha sa kathitam purvam naradena maharsina |
raghuvamsasya caritam cakara bhagavanrsih ||

Kalidasa also is not shy of declaring his indebtedness to Valmiki:

athava krtavagdvare vase asmin purva suribhih |
manau vajrasamutkirne sutrasyebasti me gatih ||

Kalidasa has his ideal in Valmiki.

The *Kumarasambhava* is also a *mahakavya* with Lord Siva as its hero. The title *Kumarasambhava* is also found in the *Ramayana* (I. 37. 31):

esa te rama gangayah bistarah abhihitah maya |
***kumarasambhavam** caiva dhyanaah punyah tathaiva ca ||*

The *Kumarasambhava* is a poem of domestic life and love with a noble purpose. The *Ramayana* is an epic which lays down the technique of attaining the four accomplishments of human life, i.e., *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksa*. *Ramayana* seem to have supplied ideas to Kalidasa when he composed his poem *Kumarasambhava*:

1. There is similarity between the lamentation of Tara (IV. 20-2) and Rati (IV canto) when they mourn the death of their husbands.
2. There are some common factors in the penance of Vedavati (VII. 7) and that of Parvati (V canto). Both practice austerities for winning a husband – Vedavati for Narayana, Parvati for Siva.

There is something great and divine about Kalidasa's genius as could be understood from his works. The present paper is an attempt to show that it is the soul of Valmiki that has passed into Kalidasa.

ETHICAL VALUES OF RAMAYANA

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Ramayana, one of the two great epics of India is idealistic in the handling of human characters. *Ramayana* is a storehouse of ancient knowledge. Philosophy, religion, customs and rituals, polity, science, social life, geography, history, economics, code of conduct, etc., find place in it.

The incarnation of Rama portrays Rama as an ideal son, brother, husband and ruler. The morals it teaches to the community are great. *Ramayana* pronounces what is necessary for day-to-day living.

In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the following ethical values which could be imparted to the community with incidents from the epic itself:

Respect for elders, parents and teachers; love for siblings; discharging regular duties even in times of adversity; follow the right path; good always triumphs over evil; annihilate the evil qualities of *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger) and *lobha* (greed). Jealousy ruins. A noble soul will ever exercise compassion.

The story of Rama teaches the threefold *dharma* (code of conduct) pertaining to the individual, the family and the society; one man, one wife (Rama); need to honour one's word (Dasharatha's plight); obeying father's words (Rama); futility of listening to vicious counselling (Mantara's advice to Kaikeyi); disappointment in having dubious attractions (golden deer); fight atrocity against women (Jatayu against Ravana); no barrier for sincere love (Guha and Sabari); every small thing has its value (squirrel); humility is virtue (Hanuman); true friendship (Sugriva and Vibishana); good people in the bad community (Trijata and Vibishana); mercy even to enemy (Rama to Ravana); truth should be proved; people's verdict (*agni pravesh* of Sita); unity is strength; no hatred towards any one; selfless service (Lakshmana and Urmila); righteousness (Bharata); patience and calm mind (Rama); total surrender (Hanuman); ideal womanhood (Sita); military ethics (sending messenger-Angada to give a final chance to Ravana).

Ramayana is idealistic in the handling of human characters. It has personified idealized human values and ethical and moral values in the form of Rama. The great *Ramayana* speaks of a good way of living, the right way to be followed, and how a man should live. It teaches that sincerity, honesty, dedication, service, loyalty, friendship, sacrifice, duty etc., are important.

There are four qualities in man: the divine, demonic, animal and human; we see examples of all these *gunas* in the *Ramayana*. *Satya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, *prema* and *ahimsa* are the five cardinal human values. Rama was trying to follow these to the utmost.

To put it in a nutshell, the *Ramayana* preaches that, “Life is a challenge, meet it. Life is a dream, realize it. Life is a game, play it. Life is love, enjoy it.”

TIME-HONORED DEPICTIONS OF RAMAYANA IN VIDARBHA (MAHARASHTRA) DURING VAKATAKAS

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The early historical period of Vidarbha can be stretched back to the 6th century BCE. During the period of the sixteen *mahajanapada*, it is visualized that there were more than a hundred *janapadas* in India. Among these, Vidarbha was one, which was, in course of time, included in the Chedi/Cheti *mahajanapada*.

Initially, the Mauryas and the Shungas had their indirect rule over Vidarbha, which was subsequently ruled by the Satvahanas and the Vakatakas. But the former ruled the region indirectly, whereas the latter had their core region in Vidarbha. In other words, the Vakatakas were the first independent rulers of Vidarbha who shaped the life and culture of Vidarbha. After the Vakatakas (250 CE to 550 CE), no ruler or dynasty has received success which can be comparable to that of the Vakatakas in terms of economic and cultural prosperity.

During the period of Prabhavati Gupta who was ruling the regime of the Vakatakas on behalf of her minor sons, it is believed that the royal poet Kalidasa, who was in the court of Chandra Gupta II (the father of Prabhavati Gupta), came to impart the education to the children of Prabhavati Gupta. During the stay of Kalidasa at Ramagiri (modern Ramtek in Vidarbha), the legend further reveals that he composed a wonderful poem *Setubandha* and *Raghuvansa*, among other classical works. Another legend further says that Pravara Sena II (the son of Rudra Sena II and Prabhavati Gupta) composed an epic *Setubandha* or *Ravanavaho* respectively on the event of Lord Rama going to Lanka and subsequently killing the demon Ravana.

A numbers of narrative panels from the epic(s) of India were found at Paunar as a chance discovery while building Vinobhaji Bhave's ashram in Wardha district of Vidarbha. There are two divergence views regarding the identification of the panels. One view supports the theme of *Ramayana* and the other *Krishna lila* or *Mahabharata*. These controversial views on the narrative panels are critically discussed in this paper. The discussion is further elaborated with the help of the classical literature of Kalidasa and other contemporary literary works, as well as the sculptures of the Vakatakas period found so far at Mansar, Mandhal and Nagardhan, all of which are in Vidarbha.

Keywords: Vakataka, Vidarbha, Kalidasa, Pravara Sena II, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Raghuvamsa*, *Setubandha*.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CHRONOLOGY OF AYODHYA

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Ayodhya, the setting for the beginning and the end of the *Ramayana*, has long been revered by devout Hindus as Rama's birthplace. Myth, legend, devotion and history mingle there in ways so complex that the reality of Ayodhya is often obscured. One way to see through the mist is to construct as rigorous a chronology of the city as our sources permits.

This paper presents some important highlights of such a chronology, from the second millennium BCE to recent times; to do so, it draws from archaeological evidence, early literature, travellers' testimonies, Islamic sources and recent developments, including the unavoidable Ram Janmabhumi vs. Babri Masjid controversy; as a result of this chronological approach, a few conclusions concerning the existence of a temple to Rama and further developments can be tentatively drawn.

TEMPLES IN AND AROUND THANJAVUR DISTRICT, IN TAMILNADU CONNECTED WITH RAMAYANA

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Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life. It is based on Sanatana Dharma which forms the basic guideline for leading a righteous life. Through its various sources, Hinduism has taught people how to lead a virtuous life. One such important source is *Ramayana*, one of the two great epics of Ancient India. The influence of the *Ramayana* on the life of Indian people has been great and immeasurable. Rama is considered as the embodiment of Dharma. He is the ideal son, husband, brother, student and father. The other characters of the epic like Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Bharata, Sugriva, Vibhishana, etc., are also paragons of virtue. The impact of this great epic can be seen in all aspects of Indian life like politics, society, religion, art and literature.

This paper traces the legacy of *Ramayana* in art with reference to temples in and around Thanjavur district in Tamilnadu.

Thanjavur is one of the 32 districts in Tamilnadu and is located in Central Tamilnadu, across which lie Thiruchirappalli and Perambalur districts. Kumbakonam is an important town in Thanjavur district and is also known as a 'temple town'. The town is bounded by two rivers, the Kaveri to the north and Arasalar to the south. It has innumerable temples dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. To mention a few, the Adi Kumbheshwara Temple, Ramaswamy Temple, Sarangapani Temple, Nageshwara Temple, Airavateswara temple, Navagraha temples, and so on.

This paper traces the legacy of the *Ramayana* in sculptures and paintings of temples like the Ramaswamy Temple which is dedicated to Lord Rama and has a number of sculptures and paintings on scenes from *Ramayana*. The *prakaram* has the *Ramayana* depicted in paintings and one can view this while circumambulating. Other prominent temples include the Nageshwara Temple and Sarangapani Temple.

Another aspect that will be analysed here is the sculpture of Hanuman or Anjaneya prevalent in the Pillars of many Vishnu temples, the various forms of Hanuman and the aspect of Hanuman's Bhakti towards Lord Rama.

In preparing for the paper several primary and secondary sources will be referred which throw light on the above mentioned aspects of *Ramayana*.

THE HISTORICAL RAMA

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Ramayana has been an Indian legend and Rama an Indian Hero right from very early times. *Ramayana* written by Valmiki gives a detailed account of the events that unfolded during the life of Rama. This story of Rama has been a part of the Indian ethos for many a millennia.

How historical is this text, the persons in this text, the geographical locations mentioned therein?

This text has always been classified in Indian literature as *Itihaasa* - meaning a historical text. The Colonial British historians who came to shape our thoughts about 200 years back called this and other texts of India as mythological. How right were they in their branding Indian *Itihaasa* as mythological?

In the last decade or so, the scientific advancements that have taken place, have helped scientific historians revisit the text for historical proofs.

Bharath Gyan has researched information on Rama from a rational, scientific and logical perspective to try and understand if Rama has in reality been a historical person.

Literary

In the *Ramayana* text, the family tree of Rama starts tracing his lineage right from Kashyapa Aditi to his times and after his times down to the times of *Mahabharata*. This means that at least 50 generations on either side of Rama have been named and their achievements mentioned. These names and their achievements have been cross verified in other literary texts of other periods of time when those kings who were the ancestors or successors to Rama lived. Such detailed lineage on either side along with their correlation in other texts would be possible only if the persons mentioned therein are historical.

In the Tamil text *Agananooru*, which belongs to the Sangam period, Rama is mentioned by name in the 70th song of *Neithal Thinai*. This indicates that he was not only popular in his region but was discussed by early Tamil scholars also.

During Mughal times, Begum Hamida Banu, wife of Humayun and the mother of Akbar, prepared the Persian version of the *Ramayana* as it was a historical text of her land. Akbar prepared one more *Ramayana* during his time as Emperor. These texts are richly painted and are today in various museums of the world. These were not prepared as religious texts but as historical texts of the land they ruled.

Geography

Ramayana as a text is geographically very correct. Every site on Rama's route is still identifiable and has continuing traditions in the form of temples to commemorate Rama's visit.

In those remote days no author had the travel facility to concoct a geographically credible story and building it into local folklore.

This speaks of a convergence of literature, archaeology and local tradition.

Archaeology

One of the ways of proving historicity today is to show archeological proof or evidence. But continuous civilization, while a marvel by itself, does not leave intact sufficient archeological remnants of its ancestors. Generations come and go and, as they keep building and rebuilding their cities, they destroy or alter these remains in order to sustain themselves. Hence, while continuous civilizations and culture itself is an existing evidence, archeological artifacts are hard to come by. Today, small occasional finds in deserted places are all what we have to attempt to learn our history.

Because the sea swallowed Dwaraka, the town became uninhabitable and frozen in time and hence, after so many thousands of years, it is still able to provide evidence for the existence of an advanced township tallying with the city described in the *Mahabharata*.

The only such uninhabited place to look for evidence around Rama's times as per the epic *Ramayana* would be to look deeper into the Rama Sethu or Adam's Bridge.

What does the text say about this bridge and what do we find in the bridge?

1. **Textual Description:** It says that during Rama's interaction with Samudra Deva, it was revealed that it was in the sea's nature to be deep and not shallow, to have waves and fierce sea creatures. Given this attribute of the sea, it was essential to find a path where Rama and his army would find it easy to cross the sea.

Nala who introduced himself as the biological descendant of Vishwakarma, an architect par excellence, offered his services for the design and construction of a bridge. On his advice, the Vanaras then piled different varieties of trees, some in bloom during that period and then large boulders followed by smaller stones to create a causeway over the sea in 5 days, over which they crossed and reached Lanka.

Physical Observation: Today there is a natural sea ridge formation over the seabed linking the land masses of India and Sri Lanka. This would vindicate the interaction between Rama and Samudra Deva to locate a place in the sea where it would be easy for Rama and his army to cross over. The question now is whether, under the layers of hardened sands, do the layers of this bridge show remnants of the trees and rocks placed there by the Vanaras, under the guidance of Nala, as described in the text?

It is to be noted that claims by certain archeological bodies that the Rama Setu is a natural formation is correct. As per the textual statement and its consequent popular belief carried over millenia, the bridge was man-made. This has led to a debate on whether the structure in the sea which forms the causeway is a man-made or a natural formation.

If the present structure is explored scientifically along its vertical section by digging through the layers of sand bars on the side and if this reveals the layers to be starting with

- the sea bed at the base
- natural rocky outcrop on top of that
- remnants of the trees as described in the text on top of that
- large boulders on top of that
- smaller stones on top of that
- sand on top of it,

then it would prove that the textual information found in the *Ramayana* tallies with the site conditions. It would reveal that as per the clues in the text, it must be a man-made accretion over a natural base, i.e, it is most likely a man-made bridge constructed over the natural sea ridge formation.

2. Textual Description: It says that the bridge's length by breadth is of ration 100:10.

Physical Observation: Today the bridge measures approx 35 km in length Vs 3.5km in breadth from Dhanushkodi to Talaimannar which is a 100:10 ratio.

Can we give a date to Rama?

The concept of describing dates astronomically has been a practice in India since days bygone and thus lot of Indian literature are embedded with such astronomical data.

There is a technique of charting the future or past sky using a scientific tool. This tool helps to arrive at planetary positions given a date in the future or the past. Such tools are collectively called Planetarium software. There are probably over 50 such different software available. Each software can be used specifically for a particular application, like plotting the current night sky chart, predicting eclipses and the like.

Unlike any other civilization, the literature of the Indian civilization is characterized with night sky observations. Feeding the observations of the planetary configurations into the Planetarium software gives us the English calendar dates when these configurations could have occurred in the past. When these dates are logically arranged along with the events, it helps us to scientifically assign dates to events mentioned in Indian legends and historical texts and validate them.

In the context of the Historicity of Rama, the works of Shri. Pushkar Bhatnagar, as brought out in the book *Dating the Era of Lord Ram* form the basis of what is presented here to understand the dates of the events in Rama's lifetime.

The *Ramayana*, when analysed from a scientific perspective using such Archeo-Astronomy techniques, shows tremendous internal consistency between the events described astronomically and the storyline based elapse time between those events.

This method puts forth the below mentioned dates for the events that occur in the *Ramayana*:

Sri Rama Navami	Birth day 10th January	5114 BCE
Birth of Bharatha	11th January	5114 BCE
Pre coronation eve	4th January	5089 BCE
Khar, Dushan episode	7th October	5077 BCE
Vali Vadham	3rd April	5076 BCE
Hanuman's Visit to Lanka	12th September	5076 BCE
Hanuman's Return from Lanka	14th September	5076 BCE
Army March to Lanka	20th September	5076 BCE

It is indeed noteworthy to observe that these dates are internally consistent. While the purpose of this software was different, it has now thrown open a potential for a new branch of science which can be named Archeo-Astronomy. It can help date events as described in literature. This software has now become declassified and is available for public use.

This modern method of Archeo-Astronomy is still not accepted or practiced by traditional historians as it requires knowledge of traditional astronomy, mathematics as well modern day sky chart reading techniques, all of which go into the realm of science. This branch of archeology requires and will create a new breed of archeologists and has the potential to date more events from our vast store of literature than traditional archeology can.

Until 1808, when Mr. James Mill & Mr. Charles Grant from Helebarry College, wrote the *History of India* and classified most of the literature of India as *mythology*, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were basically classified as *Itihasa*, meaning “It thus happened”.

Mr. Mill & Mr. Grant classified these texts as mythology on the following 4 grounds:

- The events in these texts seemed to go before the date of creation of the earth as fixed by Fr. James Usher as 9 a.m., 23rd October, 4004. Hence these texts which describe India and the existence of its civilization prior to this time could not be real and must be mythical or imaginary, a fact that has now been proven wrong by modern cosmology and traditional archeological finds.
- It was held by the colonial British that Alexander defeated Porus in 326 BCE and spread culture and civilized thought to India and that until then Indians were uncivilized barbarians. So the civilization described in these texts which seemed to be more advanced in science, technology, culture, philosophy and linguistics could not have existed prior to the arrival of Alexander and hence the texts are mythical. The existence of a civilized India prior to the arrival of Alexander been proved beyond an iota of doubt.
- The British came up with the concept of the Aryan Invasion of India which spread culture and civilized thought to India and that until then Indians were uncivilized barbarians. Hence, again, the civilization described in these texts, which seemed to be more advanced in science, technology, culture, philosophy and linguistics, could not have existed prior to the Aryan Invasion and hence the texts are mythical. The Aryan Invasion has now been dismissed by the Western historians as a concoction by the British to justify their occupation of India by painting the Indians as belonging to the Aryan race who had invaded and settled in India and set aside the original Dravidian race as lower castes. This Aryan – Dravidian classification has now been proven to be racially incorrect as the entire Indian population has been found to belong to the same race despite their differences

in features and complexion. Also, the study of traditional Indian texts, has thrown to light how the terminologies Aryan and Dravidian were based on geographical division and not racial, cultural or civilizational.

- They held that the geneologies were incoherent and hence the texts were imaginary or mythical. It is to be noted that while texts contained geneologies, their focus was on key human achievements, dharma and principles to be followed – basically lessons for life. Given this, there is therefore a good possibility for gaps or inconsistencies in discussing the order in geneology, but that cannot detract from the historicity of the texts.

Thus on all 4 grounds, Mr. Mill & Mr. Grant’s assumptions for classifying the Indian literature as mythological have been found flawed.

If these texts are to be considered historic and the events mentioned therein to be dated as close to 7000 years ago based on Archeo-Astronomy, there seems to be an inconsistency with the time period pronounced as 17,50,000 years ago, based on NASA’s satellite image?

NASA’s statement conveys the following:

There is a structure which by its curvature appears to be man-made, connecting India and Sri Lanka and may be dated as 17,50,000 years old. Many people who are familiar with the Indian concept of calculating time in the form of Yuga, immediately have done a back calculation and arrived at dates for Rama’s period going back well over lakhs of years. While the basic concept of *yuga*, *chaturyuga*, etc. are fundamental, the measure of a Yuga varies based on the object being measured. Measures such as Yuga basically denote the ratio and phase with the scale varying based on the timescale of the event being measured. E.g., Yuga for cosmic events are different from *yuga* for solar events vs *yuga* for earth events, etc.

NASA by its statement did not mean to really date the man-made bridge as much as date the land masses that the bridge links and the natural foundation under this man-made curvature. Hence NASA as right in its statement of age of the land mass as are the dates pointed to by the archeo-astronomic analysis of these historic texts.

Not only do these *Itihasa* texts corroborate each other with the *Mahabharata* declaring the Nala Setu as a protected monument, but even recent history as recorded by the post-British historians and the pre-British travelers to India, have continuously alluded to many of the cities as listed in Ramayana as well as the Rama bridge in the context of Rama only.

Until 1480, this bridge was used to cross over to Lanka by foot. There have always great plans made by the British to build a railway bridge over this causeway to link India and Sri Lanka but they were not carried out. In fact a plan to build a shipping channel was also abandoned in deference to the local sentiment.

The great Tamil poet Subramania Bharathi also refers to building a road bridge over this causeway in his poetry.

For Rama, this bridge was Nala Setu, named in honor of Nala, an engineer who belonged to the Vishwakarma clan which exists even today in the towns of Kumbakonam, Tanjore, renowned and engaged globally for their work of temple construction and sculpture.

Nala Setu symbolises today five aspects:

- The concept of extraordinary effort against adversity and the consequent victory of good over evil.
- The victory of Rama who is a Kshatriya over the *anyaya* of Ravana, a Brahmin by caste.
- Rama utilized the services of Nala, a Vishwakarma by birth and education which means that he was a qualified civil engineer of his times. The workforce for the construction was the Vanara hordes. Hence the bridge today symbolizes the engineering skill of Nala and the Vanara who were residents of Kishkindha which is modern day Hampi in the Karnataka state. Both Nala and Vanara thus geographically belong to Dravida region and perhaps were the original Dravida – Adi Dravida, while Rama geographically belonged to the Aryavarta region. So this bridge can be rightly be called as a civil engineering marvel of the Adi Dravidas.
- This indicates North-South cooperation and also brings forth as to how India was culturally and geographically one united entity right from those days.
- This Setu also symbolizes the bridge between faith and a logical, scientific and rational understanding of India and its legends.

HISTORICITY OF RAWANA & TRAILS OF RAMA – SEETHA IN SRI LANKA

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The world is a web of truly tangled histories. Continuous evidence of events is called history. Lack of archaeological evidence is not a reason to deny history. Historical evidence confirms that many centuries ago Asians visited America in large numbers. The Mayans were talented technicians, great builders and architects. The discovery of Patala kingdom in the Andes mountains of South America confirms a distinct connection to Mayans. The Spanish who destroyed the Mayan civilization in the 14th and 15th centuries called it the “Inca” civilization. Mayans gained knowledge of classic works of Indian Vedic astronomy from *Surya Siddhanta*. Lanka, the “glorious land”—is referred to in ancient Indian literature such as the *Vishnu Purana*, *Skanda Purana*, *Matsya Purana*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

Ramayana and *Mahabharata* were condemned as “Hindu Mythology” by western historians but were stunned on August 6th 1944 when the first atomic bomb exploded in Hiroshima during World War II. There are ample evidences that nuclear wars had occurred in prehistoric times. The oldest existing is dated from the 11th century CE. The current popular texts of *Valmiki Ramayana*, *Tulsi Ramayana* are from North India and *Kamba Ramayana* from South India. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* had a decisive control in shaping the nature of Indian society.

Ramayana plays a basic part in the national consciousness of India. The term *Ramayana*, means “the march of Rama.” It describes the life of Rama, a prince of Ayodhya, whose wife Seetha was abducted by the Asura Emperor Rawana. Valmiki recorded all the events of Rama as they happened; he was Rama’s contemporary and his biographer. Even so, as with most traditional epics, *Ramayana*, the recorded life history of Rama, too had to go through a long process of interruptions. In the *Valmiki Ramayana*, Rama is described as an ideal human being, but with Brahminical rewriting Rama is finally was introduced as a supreme deity. Rama is presented mainly as a human hero.

Valmiki, the author of *Ramayana* was a contemporary of Rama. This fact gives it the credibility of *Ramayana* being an authentic historical account. Rawana was the grandson of Rishi Pulasthi and the

son of Sage Vishrawas. Rawana was the younger step brother of Kuvera. Though the character of Rawana may seem like a closed book, there is sufficient plurality that even Rawana is capable of some recovery.

Rawana is worshipped in some parts of India. In short, Rawana is a tragic hero, not a villain. The Sri Lankan populace valued cultural values greater than power or strength. Rama accepted Rawana as a Brahmin scholar in Sanskrit and a great king and ordered a cremation suitable for a great king and Brahmin. Rawana is a chief character in *Ramayana* and is of immense moral and physical strength. According to the *Uttarakanda Ramayana*, Malyavantha, Sumalin and Sukesha of the Rakus clan governed Lanka. This ousted the Rakus rulers in Sri Lanka. There are many inscriptions and locations pertaining to Rawana, Rama, and Seetha in Sri Lanka.

WOMEN IN RAMAYANA - PORTRAYALS, UNDERSTANDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS AND RELEVANCE

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The women from the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have played crucial roles in Indian tradition, that every Indian woman even today continues to be influenced by their life graphs.

“The strong and quiet story spoke straight to the heart of the people... to this day, no one force that goes so far towards the moulding of Indian womanhood as the ever living touch of the little hand of that Sita who is held to have been Queen of Ayodhya...” Sister Nivedita. Indian women are practical and “earth-bound”, at the same time they are passionate and “fiery”; serene and “fluid” (adaptable) with a free and elusive spirit and craving for “space” for themselves... in a nutshell combining the five elements in their personalities. As the inheritors of the “*Panchakanya*” concept, they have dual personalities. They are bound by strict norms of society on the one hand; yet they are left free to use the chinks in the armour of social and traditional laws made by the male-oriented social order. Within the scope of social boundaries they could still express their personalities and design their own life.

Among the feminine icons of Indian tradition, a few epic characters stand out prominently. They are (from the *Ramayana*), Sita, the wife of King Rama of Ayodhya, Mandodari, the wife of King Ravana of Lanka, Ahalya, wife of Sage Gautama and Tara, wife of the Vanara King Vali. Each of these women is described as beautiful and virtuous. They are presented as strong, spirited characters with calm inner determination based on values, that they came to be worshipped as ideals of womanhood. They came to be called as the *Panchakanya* (five women) whose names were invoked to symbolise auspiciousness and spiritual strength. It is interesting to note that they were coveted by kings or even gods and they had to face travails and tragedies, yet emerged out of them with greater renown.

The women described by Valmiki can be brought under two main types records Swami Nihshreyasananda. One is represented by saintly ladies as Anasuya, Shabari and Swayamprabha referred to as the forest group who led a life of mental discipline. Ahalya belongs to this group. Her struggles, fall and further discipline teach us an invaluable lesson. The second type is represented by women who remained in society, led a family life and rose to eminence by faithfully discharging their duties. In this

category come Mandodari, Sarama and Trijata, all residing in Lanka. Then comes Tara residing in Kishkindha, the three queens of Dasharatha residing in Ayodhya and finally Sita, who revealed her strength and emotions wherever she was placed. “Sita is unique; that character was depicted once and for all. There may have been several Ramas perhaps, but never more than one Sita,” declares Swami Vivekananda.

Valmiki’s portrayal of Sita is not a lifeless model of perfection. He was aware of the failings of a woman in distress and sorrow.

While the above describe the appreciative understandings of the portrayal of women in the *Ramayana*, it is interesting to hear about the interpretations in the modern and feminist perspectives.

According to some, the portrayals of women in the *Ramayana* bring to light a noteworthy collection of stereotypes found in myths, folklore and fairy tales from every period and country many times over. For example, women disfigured as Manthara are portrayed as evil, manipulative and conniving, while beautiful women such as Sita are kind, obedient and righteous.

Some believe that Sita is more sinned against at the hands of her near and dear while some bemoan the lack of importance and clear and elaborate delineations of characters like Urmila and Trijata.

Ramayana from a feminist perspective or Sita’s *Ramayana* have gained dubious popularity recently. They emphasize that “Heroism is not restricted to the conventional male values of anger or bravery on a battlefield”, and they celebrate feminine virtues such as sisterhood, justice, dignity, patience and solidarity with all beings.

When women retell the *Ramayana*, as Molla or Chandrabati do in the sixteenth century works or Ranganayakamma on an ideological basis or the regional village women’s songs, they say that Sita’s myth “give them a voice”

This paper analyses varied viewpoints, taking note of recent trends, and relates the relevance of the rich cultural cum literary heritage of the *Ramayana*, the repository of societal values, today.

TELLING OR SHOWING? RAMAYANA IN GRAPHIC NOVELS

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The Indian myths are a rich storehouse of stories found in the *Hitopdesha*, *Katha-Sarit-sagara*, *Jatakas*, *Puranas* and Epics as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Myths are significant for their timelessness. They are also a source of motivation, inspiration or a parallel for society and its people. Myths evolved side by side with intellectual, social and political changes, transforming themselves with the demands of the time. For most people mythical characters are archetypes of living values. The same is true of the *Ramayana*, and the *Ramayana* characters that have remained beyond dichotomies as ancient and modern, western and eastern, dominant and recessive, oral and literary and so on.

Ramayana's use and its simultaneous manifestations in different media as in the graphic novels *Sita - the Daughter of the Earth* by Saraswati Nagpal and *Sita's Ramayana* by Samhita Arni and Moyna Chitrakar present interesting issues. A graphic novel is a narrative work in which story is conveyed to the reader using sequential art in experimental design or traditional comic format bound as a book. What all goes into the production, creation and reading of these comics and graphic novels is an interesting issue. It can be called a pictographic narrative known to man since the Egyptian cave paintings where forms depicted ideas rather than symmetry or aesthetics. Today they are vibrant and culturally relevant means of communication surprising readers with a new space by presenting a story set in a different temporal frame, galaxy, place and time. It may give a new identity and meaning to characters known and unknown. It can also be called an autobiography if it is in the first person. In its narration process it may also redefine its cultural appropriation making a story of the east suitable for a western audience hence familiarizing icons cultural and national with others in the world. So what is read as novel and graphic novel is simultaneously some other genre as well.

What is in the tale that excites the imagination of painters, artistes and singers to take it up year after year, to experiment with it and retell it as a transcreated narrative to suit their purpose? What is that purpose? What is so graphic and so novel in it? Does *Ramayana* in this way become a medium of voicing the contemporary concerns, issues and ground realities of the region it emerges in? What is the part that a region plays in its presentation? Whose tale is it? Why does it ride on a myth? Why are mythical figures used as vehicles of story-telling? Do they tell of contemporary and relevant issues? Do they mirror social realities of the area they are composed in? Is it hence a form of serious literature communicating a serious message? What is the message? Does that make the author a sociologist too? Do colors and form contribute significantly to this process? The paper shall examine all these issues and many more.

HISTORICITY OF RAMAYANA ON THE LEADS OF PLATO'S TIMAEUS & CRITIAS & VALMIKI'S RAMAYANA

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The word Plato used to describe Atlantis is 'Nesos'; it's the Greek word for 'Island'. It is exactly what Plato described of Atlantis in 360 BCE. Since the first recorded history of Atlantis by Plato nearly three million years ago, debate raged whether Atlantis was a reality. Plato confirms it. The evidence surfaced confirms that Lemuria and Atlantis are one. The history of Lanka told in *Ramayana* is the actual model of Plato's Atlantis, as well as Homer's Troy. What is Plato's account? Plato's Atlantis was close to where they lived 10,000 years ago. Plato states that Atlantis was near Hercules (Krishna). By the word pillar, did Plato signify the Island in the Southeast of India, Sri Lanka?

The evidence projects that Lanka is the part of the massive lost Island. There are many realistic evidences that present Lanka as the remainder of a large Island, as illustrated by Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*.

If 7600 BCE is the correct timing of *Ramayana*, this is when the war between India and Lanka took place. Plato said that Atlantis (Lanka) attacked Athens (India), which is the original Greek name for India. Though Plato assured in *Timaeus* and *Critias* that Atlantis (Lanka) attacked Athens (India) we have to accept Valmiki's recording, as Athens (India) attacked Atlantis (Lanka) in his biography of Rama, as he recorded all events as it happened. Astronomical dating places *Ramayana* at 9600 years. The subsequent facts prove the precise survival of Lemuria called Atlantis. The astronomical evidence firmly dates the *Ramayana* 9600 years and as per historical evidence India and Lanka were at war. Plato confirms the above findings. According to the maps of Eratosthenes and Ptolemy, Lanka was a huge Island and the present Sri Lanka was once part of a vast Island. Lemuria was called Atlantis by Plato, Lankapura by Valmiki and named as Rutas in the *Rig Veda* and finally ended up as Lankapura (Sri Lanka).

DISCOVERED: A SUNKEN ISLAND, AN INDIAN OCEAN ATLANTIS?

Godawaya, Sri Lanka: 14 March 2009:

Marine archaeologists have just discovered evidence of a large submerged landmass southeast of Sri Lanka. Atlantis is a legendary island mentioned by Greek philosopher Plato. Valmiki recorded this

Island in the life history of Rama, the *Ramayana*. Plato spoke of Atlantis much later than Valmiki. The Greek philosopher Plato named Lemuria Atlantis. It was a huge Island in the Indian Ocean, South of India, now identified as a part of present Sri Lanka.

The only record of Atlantis we have is from Plato. Astronomical evidence confirms that this incident took place around 9600 BCE. The Indo-Europeans originating in India is based on historical evidence. Sinking of Lankapura (Atlantis) is detailed in *Ramayana*; as such it's a historical record. With the recent discovery of a submerged land in deep-southeast Lanka, many credible theories surfaced that Lanka is Atlantis.

RAMA TEMPLES IN SOUTH INDIA

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There are a large number of temples in South India, big and small, dedicated to Sri Rama. Many of them enshrine this deity as Kodanda Rama, i.e., standing with bow in hand and seen with Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman. There are some shrines where Rama is seen as Pattabhi Rama, seated in the coronation ceremony (*pattabhishekham*) with Sita seated by His side and Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna standing near Him and with Hanuman, His faithful devotee in front. However, there are some temples where this deity is seen in unusual forms such as a reclining image. Moreover, even when He is seen as Kodanda Rama or Pattabhi Rama, those particular temples where this deity is enshrined may have some unusual features as far as the main image or the processional image is concerned. One such is the Seetha Ramachandra Swami temple located in Bhadrachalam, Andhra Pradesh. Here the deity is Chaturbhujia Rama or Rama with four arms holding the *sankha* (conch), *chakra* (discus), *dhanus* (bow) and *bana* (arrow). Usually Rama is depicted as two-armed, holding only the *dhanus* and *bana*, but here He is seen with the emblems of Vishnu, the *sankha* and *chakra*, representing Vishnu Himself. The present construction was of the time of Kancharla Gopanna, better known as Bhadrachala Ramadas, a great Rama *bhakta* of the 17th century A.D. While this temple is very well-known, there is another little-known temple for Chaturbhujia Rama in a small village called Ponpadirkudam near Chengalpet (near Chennai) in Tamil Nadu. In this little shrine, both the stone and the bronze images are four-armed. This is very rare indeed.

Ponvilainda Kalathur is another village near Chengalpet in which there is a Rama temple dedicated to Dharbhasayana Sethurama. The bronze image of Rama has 'Darbha Sayana Rama' inscribed on His crown and 'Tirupullani Setu Rama' etched at the base. The stone icon (*moolavar*) was therefore made just like the Rama image in the temple at Tirupullani (Ramanthapuram district). It is a well-known episode in the *Valmiki Ramayana* that Rama lay on a bed of *darbha* (sacred grass used for religious rites) on the sea-shore to propitiate the Lord of the Ocean (Samudra Raja) to secure a safe passage to Lanka. When the latter did not appear before Him, Rama was enraged and dispatched arrows aimed at the ocean. It was at that time that the Lord of the Ocean appeared before Rama and assured Him that it would be easy for His army to cross over the waters to Lanka.

The image of Rama in Ponvilainda Kalatur is in a reclining posture with His bow resting on His chest and the arrows laid to His right. The ever-vigilant Lakshmana stands with bow and arrows behind the recumbent Rama, while Anjaneya stands with folded hands at the Lord's feet.

Interestingly, next to the image of Hanuman is the icon of Samudra Raja also with His hands in *anjali*, paying His respects to Rama.

The Ramaswami temple in Kumbakonam has a unique image of Sri Rama as Pattabhirama in a sitting posture with Sita to His left as in the coronation ceremony (*pattabhishekha*). They are both on the same pedestal (seat) with Lakshmana standing to Rama's right. Bharata also stands to His right but facing West, holding an umbrella (*chatra*) in silver. Satrugna stands with the fly-whisk (*chamara*), facing East. Hanuman sits in a corner of this sanctum facing Rama with a veena held upright in His right hand (*veenadhari*) and left hand holding a manuscript of the *Ramayana*. This image of Anjaneya is a very unusual and rare one not seen elsewhere. Here, one sees the grandeur of Sri Rama, the benevolence of Sita, the humility of Rama's brothers and the utter devotion of Anjaneya.

There are also some interesting legends connected with some Rama temples such as the one in the town of Madhurantakam in Tamil Nadu where this deity is believed to have answered the prayers of a Colonel Lionel Place, an English Collector and prevented the bund of a lake (*eri*) nearby from breaching during heavy rains. The sanctum of Sita (Janakavalli) was constructed by this Collector as a token of gratitude to Sri Rama who is called Eri Katha Rama (Rama, who protected the lake). While this episode is rather well-known, there is another shrine for Eri Katha Rama in the town of Thiruninravur which too is situated near a lake. This deity is said to have saved the people of the town by preventing the flood waters from entering the town.

The Hazara Rama temple in Hampi, the capital of the glorious Vijayanagara empire, has some outstanding sculptural panels of various episodes from the *Ramayana*.

These, and many other such interesting facts and episodes relating to architecture, art and tradition in various Rama temples across South India, will be the focus of this paper.

EPIC RETOLD- RAMAYANA INFLUENCING ENGLISH GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR CHILDREN IN INDIA OVER THE YEARS

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This paper attempts to explore the storytelling aspects of graphic novels in English in India, using the Indian epic - the *Ramayana*. The paper focuses on how the genre of graphic novels utilised the story from the famous epic to reach out to the young audience across India through visual representation. The paper also explores the methods of communication and how both folk and urban culture-communications are interwoven through such visual representation.

The world of comics and graphic novels has always exuded a wonder of its own, appealing to the young as well as the elderly. The history of English comics in India is relatively new as compared to its western counterparts in Europe or USA and dates only back to about six decades. The term graphic novel is also relatively new in India, especially evolving and finding a potential market only over the last one decade. Though the words 'comics' and 'graphic novels' often share similar bases in the various versions outside India, especially in USA and Europe, yet I believe, in India, the latter carries a more responsible duty on its shoulder as a storyteller as they attempt to maintain a closeness to the folk traditions of the nation. In its formats of telling stories, as well as depiction, portrayal of characters, themes and ideas, the Indian graphic novels have been immensely influenced by the various folk and oral traditions from across the nation with the biggest and most prominent examples coming from the Indian epics - the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* - over the years. This paper attempts to study the effects of the *Ramayana* on the development of Indian English graphic novels over the years, especially influencing communication with and for young and the young-at-heart readers.

CHUDAMANI – THE CREST JEWEL OF SITA AND ITS SYMBOLISM IN THE RAMAYANA

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Chuda means the single tuft or lock left on the head, the crest of the peacock, the summit and a top-room. It is a meter with 4x7 syllables and an eclipse of the Sun on a Sunday or an eclipse of the moon on a Monday and a particular way of foretelling the future. *Mani* means a jewel worn by men and women on the top of the head. *Chudamani* also denotes the highest title bestowed on a person to recognize him as meritorious.

The crest jewels worn on the rear portion of the head by gods was called *siraschakra*, as that worn by the goddesses was *chudamani*. Among all the jewels, *chudamani* is the rare kind and is a symbol of status for married women. It is circular or leaf-shaped, inserted or screwed on the bun of the hair at the back of the head. The jewel receives prime importance in the *Aranyakanda* of the *Ramayana*. When Hanuman discovers the whereabouts of Sita, the wife of Rama, and eventually talks to her, she sends through Hanuman, to Rama, the *chudamani* worn by her.

The present paper will investigate the symbolism of the jewel *chudamani* and the significance it holds in the context of *Ramayana*.

Keywords: *Ramayana*, Sita, *Chudamani* and Symbolism.

BHRATRU BHAVA IN RAMAYANA - A CRITIQUE

(BONDING RELATIONSHIP OF BROTHERHOOD IN RAMAYANA)

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In the epic poem *Ramayana*, we find the intriguing verse, as Rama's words,

Dese dese kalatrani dese dese ca Bhandhava I

Tam tu desam na pasyami yatra bhrata sahodara II

Meaning – ‘wives are easy to get in many parts of the world. Dear relations may be seen almost anywhere. But I do not know any region of the earth where a brother like Lakshmana can be had’ (*Yuddha kanda* - canto 101 - verse 15).

These words are uttered by Rama on seeing the fainted Lakshmana in the battlefield. One should remember that Rama had two more brothers besides Lakshmana - Bharata and Satrughna. Indeed, he is equally affectionate to all the three. In fact all the four brothers are mutually affectionate to each other.

Lakshmana and Rama are inseparable like *vak* and *artha*, i.e word and its meaning. While Rama is known to be an embodiment of serenity and tranquility, Lakshmana is a symbol of impatience and suspicion. However Lakshmana's love and affection for Rama is unique and uncompromising. He is characterized as the very embodiment of the principle of *kainkarya*, i.e service, and total submission. His service enraptures Rama in the highest order. Rama declares that in Lakshmana, he could visualize Dasharatha as if he were alive in the garb of Lakshmana. This indeed is a unique statement about a younger brother without any parallel in any literature. In emoting as a committed and loving brother, Lakshmana is a paragon of brotherhood.

The emotional meeting between Rama and Bharata in Chitrakuta and Bharata's reproach of Kaikeyi on his return from Kekaya bears testimony to his love for Rama. Bharata's love, affection and affinity towards Rama is well known. With a view to making Satrughna independent, Rama orders him to proceed to the city Madhupura or Madhura, offering him a chance to prove his mettle. In fact, Satrughna offers to go there when Rama suggests that Bharata should go. Satrughna kills the dangerous Lavanasura (as instructed by Rama) and is coronated as the King of Madhura by Rama.

Thus, Rama not only exudes brotherly affection but as the eldest of them, guides them on the righteous path as a dutiful brother. He thinks that it is his duty to put them in the right stead. He feels that as royal siblings they should be an epitome of true brotherhood to the subjects of the country.

In contrast, one finds in the *Ramayana*, Ravana and his brothers. There is a *subhashita* known as revealing the quintessence of the Epic in two lines:

yanti nyaya pravrttasya tiryanchopi sahayatam I
Apanthanam tu gacchantam sodaropi vimuncati II

(‘When a person yearns to go on the righteous path, even creatures will extend their help; whereas when one deviates from the right path, even his own brother will discard him.’)

This couplet has a special reference to *Ramayana* - the first half referring to Rama and the second half to Ravana and Vibhishana. Even Kumbhakarna advises Ravana to hand Sita over to Rama so that he may be absolved of all his sins and could be spared from the wrath of Rama. But it is fate that prevails. The incarnation of Rama signifies the slaying of Ravana for his excesses.

Thus, in the *Ramayana*, one can see the two sets of brothers with contrasting character traits.

Aside from Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana and Satrugna on one side and Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana on another side, we have brothers Vali and Sugriva also in prominence in the *Ramayana*.

The paper will present a picture of views and appraisal of other characters on the ‘Brothers’ to a certain extent with signified relevance, apart from analyzing the nature and aspects of ‘Brotherhood’ in Epic poetry.

RAMAYANA AS A SOURCE FOR YOGIC CONCEPTS

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The main purpose of Vedas is to establish the unique nature of the Ultimate Reality. Vedas form the integral source of knowledge for all the branches of literature in India.

Six systems of philosophy emerged from various thinkers of ancient times. All of them analysed the Vedic principles from their own perspectives. *Sankhya* and *Yoga* come under this category. *Yoga* doctrines are found in all the four Vedas. The *Samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanisads* contain many Yogic concepts and practices.

Patanjali (150 B.C.) compiled the Yogic principles, codified them into *sutra* forms and founded the *Yoga* school of philosophy. Later on many branches of *Yoga* like *Hatha Yoga*, *Laya Yoga* and *Mantra Yoga* emerged. While some of the yogic texts followed *Patanjala Yogasutra*, some of them deviated from it.

Ramayana and *Mahabharata* contain ample evidence that Yogic principles and practices were known before Patanjali.

In *Ramayana* many instances can be cited which incorporate yogic principles. It is the immortal tale of Rama that teaches us the values of devotion, truth, duty, relationships, righteousness and *karma*. Rama was the supreme Yogi. His one-pointed mind manifested itself in his character during action as a warrior, a son, a husband, a friend and a king. He was the personification of all Yogic principles. The whole epic shows the mankind the way to spirituality. The utility of *yamas* and *niyamas* in handling the challenges in life is depicted in *Ramayana*.

Many Upanisads like *Ramapurvatapini Upanisad*, *Ramottaratapini Upanisad* and *Ramarahasyopanisad* confirm that *Ramayana* was highly influential in the emerging of later Yogic texts.

Saint Valmiki was a great Yogi and he visualised the whole *Ramayana* episode in meditation. *Ramayana*, besides being a source of rich information on many sources of knowledge such as polity also contains yogic principles which influenced later yogic texts.

This paper is intended to throw light on how *Ramayana* influenced later Yogic texts which describe many yogic techniques and precepts.

A FEW IMPORTANT PAHARI RAMAYANA DRAWINGS AND PAINTING FROM THE SETH KASTURBHAI LALBHAI COLLECTION

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The collection of Indian Miniature Paintings of the late Seth Kasturbhai Lalbhai of Ahmedabad is well known to all scholars and lovers of Indian miniature painting. He was a leading industrialist and mill owner of Gujarat and patron of culture, art and Jaina studies, being himself a devout Jain. The Kasturbhai Lalbhai Collection in Ahmedabad comprises of over 1855 drawings and unfinished paintings, representing most of the schools of Indian miniature painting. It has remained under safe custody for more than half a century and has not been art historically classified. These drawings are of various sub-schools of Rajasthan and Pahari styles, such as Kotah, Guler and Kangra, besides Mughal and including late Mughal manifestations in Oudh/Lucknow and Murshidabad, mostly executed during the eighteenth century. This collection includes numerous folios of decorative designs for textile and other media. Ragamala, Krishna Lila and Hindu deities are represented in many folios including scores of *Ramayana* drawings of the Pahari School.

This paper is an attempt to identify *Ramayana* drawings which throw light on the Pahari drawings painting from the Western Himalayan foothills of India. Since these paintings and drawings illustrate a portion of *Ramayana*, a style of painting became the quintessential form of Hindu Art in the hills during the closing decades of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the 19th century. Since most of these paintings were made to serve as visual aids to the recitation of the *Ramayana*, the painters depicted in a narrative cinematic manner to give an impression of movement, action and unfolding of events.

TEXTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL DYNAMISM IN RAMAYANA SCULPTURES

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RAMAYANA NARRATIVE PANEL - VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE PATTADAKAL

The epic *Ramayana* is the most popular text with three hundred versions since it was compiled by the sage Valmiki in Sanskrit, followed by varied versions in most of the well developed scripts of India and other scripts such as Javanese, Chinese, Japanese, and Burmese. In India the textual tradition of *Ramayana* with its main storyline has seen outstanding Sanskrit versions like *Adhyatma Ramayana* and *Adbhuta Ramayana* attributed to Valmiki, *Agastya Ramayana* and *Vasishtha Ramayana* attributed to Agastya and Vasishtha respectively and the regional versions like *Kamba Ramayana*, a 12th century Tamil text, *Kumudendu Ramayana*, a 13th century Kannada text of Jaina tradition, *Ramachandra Charita Purana* of Nagachandra and later texts like Kumara Valmiki's *Torave Ramayana* of the 16th century, Muddanna's *Adbhuta Ramayana* and *Ramashvamedha* and Kuvempu's *Sree Ramayanadarshanam* of present times are Kannada texts, Goswami Tulasidas's *Ramcharita manas* in Avadh, *Sri Ranganatha Ramayanamu* and the *Molla Ramayanamu* by poetess Molla are Telugu versions of the *Ramayana*. All belong to the 16th century. Similarly Bengali, Assami, Oriya, Malayalam and even Urdu versions of *Ramayana* were composed after the 16th century.

This brief survey indicates the increasing interest in the adaptation of Valmiki *Ramayana* text in the length and breadth of the country sustaining as a dynamic model with its socio-religious and historical dimensions subject to the process of contextualization. During the process of moving from textual to contextual, the performative and visual art forms saw a great potential in the story and characters of *Ramayana* to integrate narration, emotion and analytical framework addressing the creativity of the artists. As a result, the early series of *Ramayana* narratives make their way into the premises of the Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal, followed by the sculptural panels from Kailasa Temple, Ellora. After these early attempts, the *Ramayana* panels caught the imagination of the sculptors and they never hesitated to use the themes from *Ramayana* texts in many ways, following their instincts in a highly creative manner.

Many times, the first part of the *Ramayana* till the *Rama Pattabhishekha* found its place in the sculptural panel. But in a very few cases like the Ramachandra Temple of Hampi, the events of the *Uttara Ramayana* make their presence felt in the sculptural panels.

This paper explores the dynamism of textual and contextual approaches in the sculptural panels of *Ramayana*. The artworks are powerful, challenging, and meaningful in contextualising the textual narration, which are drawn from the Virupaksha, Papanatha temples, Pattadakal, Kailasanatha Temple Ellora and Ramachandra (Hazara) Temple from Hampi.

THE DEPICTION OF RANI KAIKEYI IN THE RAMACHARITAMANASA

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The *Ramayana* is one of the two great epics, the other being the *Mahabharata*, which have had a tremendous influence on the Indian civilization. The *Ramayana* is the religious epic depicted by sage Valmiki and later on by Tulasidasa (in Hindi) and Kamban (in Tamil) and several others in regional languages. It belongs to a class of literature known in Sanskrit as *kavya* (poetry). In this *kavya*, the poets have described the legend of the Kosala King Dasharatha, with Ayodhya as his capital, whose eldest son Rama was sent into exile for fourteen years and his brother Bharata acted as caretaker for such period until Rama returned from the forest. The main frame of the story of the *Ramayana* is very well known in India.

In Hindu tradition it is very commonly said that without Draupadi's participation, the *Mahabharata* war would not have happened. Similarly, without the interference of the Kaikeyi, the favourite queen of Dasharatha, the legend of Rama and the purpose of his *avatara* would not have taken shape in the *kavya* form. The significant role of Kaikeyi in the *Ramayana* forms the basis of entire *kavya*. Though Rani Kaikeyi is said to be responsible for Rama's exile, yet she is given an exalted status in the *kavya*. This fact cannot be understood unless and until one reads *Ramayana* deeply and finds out the metaphysical secret hidden in it.

In the *Ramacharitamanasa*, the poet has very realistically explained both the positive and negative qualities of Rani Kaikeyi. However, there is a misconception about the behaviour of Kaikeyi on the basis of her sending Rama to the forest and thus killing her husband Dasharatha. No mother would like to call her daughter by the name of Kaikeyi. Now we have to clarify two important factors. Firstly, was she really such a mean and selfish woman to be accused and secondly, how far this kind of accusation of Kaikeyi can be accepted. To justify these facts, I have brought out six questions followed by analytical explanations in my paper.

DREAM MOTIF – RAMAYANA INHERITANCE

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Omens are natural occurrences that indicate events good or bad, that are to happen, in the near future.

The words like *adbhuta*, *utpata*, *nimmitta*, *sakuna* and *vaikrta* denote them. *Adbhuta* occurs several time in *Rgveda* in the sense of wonderful, future, portentous. The word *sakuna* meaning a bird is derived from their ability to raise “*saknoti atmanamunnetum*”; because they could indicate the future events the same word “*sakuna*” is later used for denoting the omens.

The events which would follow are indicated by (1) throbbing of different parts of body which is known as *anghasphurana* or *angaspandana*. (2) The movement of birds and animals as well as the sounds raised by them, (3) Some other significant miscellaneous events, and (4) dreams form omens in general.

Dream significance is an important motif in Sanskrit Literature. In many a work it is used an indicator of coming events, good or bad. There was a regular science of dreams in ancient India with persons well-versed in to whom people repaired for the interpretation of their dreams which they themselves could not divine the events in them being indicated through symbols. The aftermath of the dreams, the heaviness or the easiness of the mind as well taken to represent their bad effect or otherwise.

The first occurrence of dream in the *Ramayana*, is found in *Ayodhya Kanda*, wherein Dasharatha decides to install Rama as *yuvaraja*.

A still larger portrayal of a dream is found in the latter part of *Ayodhya kanda* wherein Bharata, staying at his uncle’s palace, dreams about his father’s impending death. The dream of Bharata is precognitive, one of the most common types of ESP.

The more popular and widely quoted premonitory dream is found in the *Sundara kanda*. Sita is held captive by Ravana in his Ashoka grove, and is surrounded by demonesses who torment her day and

night. Trijata, one of the Rakasas who feels compassion for Sita, has a premonitory dream foretelling the fall of Lanka. Her dream has some resemblance with the dream of Bharata, combining both precognition and prophetic omens, though hers is more picturesque.

From the forgoing presentation of the various dreams as gleaned from the *Ramayana*, it can be discerned that these texts narrate dreams that are often premonitive and later were proved true to even minute details. Again, it could be seen from the narrations that the dreams prepare human beings to meet the consequences with equanimity. This is more evident in the case of dreamers of inauspicious dreams, like Dasharatha and Bharata. Also, the auspicious dreams give hope to characters like Sita to sustain her life and relieved from despondency.

Many of these portents have been analysed in Ayurvedic texts and have been related to various physiological and psychological disorders. They also have been used as symptoms for diagnosing ailments even to this day.

VALMIKI AND MANY RAMAYANAS

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Scholars agree that *Valmiki Ramayana* is the *adikavya*. Over the last several centuries, more than 300 original works have been written. These have been about 25 in Sanskrit alone apart from *Ramayanas* in 25 Indian and 15 foreign languages. In addition, there have been several translations, retellings, commentaries and research papers. While the broad storyline remains the same in most *Ramayanas*, there are several differences in each of them. Primarily, Rama transitions from a perfect man in Valmiki to achieving God status in most of the other works. Over the centuries, deep philosophical interpretations have taken center stage in the story line (e.g. *Adhyatma Ramayana*, *Ramcharitamanas* of Tulsi Das).

In many parts of India, the authors of *Ramayanas* have adapted the work to local conditions and period influences. The poetical imagination enriches these *Ramayanas*. Some authors have written *Ramayanas* to suit the common man's understanding. Poets from different parts of India have fully exploited the rich potential of the local languages (e.g. Tamil, Telugu, Assamese, etc.) in their storytelling.

Philosophers and commentators have drunk from the vast treasures of the *Ramayana*. Parables have been introduced to communicate deep philosophical meanings. While most of the *Ramayanas* are in poetry form, there are several in prose, *champu*, drama, folk music, etc. Dramatists such as Bhasa (second century B.C.), Bhavabhuti (eight century A.D.) have demonstrated their flair for storytelling through drama. Bhavabhuti, for example, deals only with the *Uttara Kanda*, with amazing flashback techniques – to the envy of modern day dramatists.

Terms such as '*Lakshman rekha*', widely used in modern day do not find a place in many *Ramayanas*. Similarly, '*maya sita*' which is found in many *Ramayanas* is absent in *Valmiki Ramayana*. '*Sita swayamvaram*' varies depending on the poet's imagination. Rama Ravana *yuddham* has several interesting sub-stories, not found in *Valmiki Ramayana*. The social milieu prevailing at the time of the poet's composition of the *Ramayana* appears to have strongly influenced the dramatization.

The non-Hindu *Ramayanas*, such as the Jain, Buddhist, Thai, approach the story and the philosophy from completely different perspectives. Even in Hindu versions, the philosophical orientation of the poet - Advaita/Visishtadvaita/Dvaita has an impact on the story.

Apart from written word, *Ramayana* in other art forms - sculptures, murals, puppetry, folk or classical dance and songs - has once again brought to fore the deep and lasting impact the *Ramayana* has had on the population at large. The vision of *Ramayarajya* (described by Valmiki and Tulsi Das, for example) appears to be the Utopia that most of us seek in contemporary life. Similarly, the reading of *Sundara kandam* across many regions, the singing of *Hanuman Chalisa* and burning the effigy of Ravana in *Ram Lila* celebrations have all become part of Hindu culture. Many *Ramayan*s are considered to be outstanding pieces of literature in their respective languages. It is then no wonder that the *Ramayana* has existed for this long and will continue to survive for as long as there is life on earth.

SRI RAM TEMPLE AT AYODHYA

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After Tojo Vikas International submitted its report stating that their findings need to be verified by archaeological excavations, the Honorable High Court, after a great deal of thought, passed order directing the Archaeological Survey of India to conduct excavations in the area surveyed by Tojo Vikas International and submit their report in a stipulated time frame. The H'ble High Court reposed their faith in Archaeological Survey of India as they found that this 140 years old organization has money, manpower, mind, specialization and above all professional ethics. They could have asked Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University, Kolkata University, and Deccan College or for that matter any other University or State Departments, but they selected the Archaeological Survey of India. As this Commission was appointed by the H'ble High Court and that too a highly technical Commission, it was not so easy to dismiss its findings though the Sunni Central Board of Waqfs, U.P. and some others prayed for its outright rejection.

Normally, to conduct archaeological excavations anywhere in India, the aspirant party has to submit an application in a prescribed proforma by 31st of July to the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, who in turn submits all the applications before the standing committee, an elected body of the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology, for their consideration and recommendation. But in the case of Ayodhya, the H'ble High Court was in a hurry for the first time, though the case was before the Courts since 1949. Using his special powers, the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, agreed with the H'ble Court's directions. The second unprecedented order of the H'ble Court was that "The report will be submitted within one week from the date of completion of the excavation". To write a report of any large scale excavation, covering all aspects including examination of bones, chemical examination of soil and mortar samples, etc. normally takes at least twelve to sixteen months. The third unprecedented order was to change the team leader at the fag end of the excavation knowing fully well that it is the original team leader under whose leadership the entire excavation was conducted and who only is in know of all technical details in the field, the H'ble Court passed the order. This was not a Court-like attitude. It is a pity that the then Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, did not protest as the team leader was appointed by him and not by the H'ble Court. The misconception that the judiciary can do anything and that too in technical matters should be removed for the sake of justice, as we are not master of all the subjects.

Under the orders of the H'ble High Court, even in the composition of labour, religious quota was introduced for the first time in any archaeological excavations anywhere in the world.

It was on 3rd of August 2003, Dr. S.P. Gupta and Shri K.N. Dixit, my ex-colleagues in Archaeological Survey of India, contacted me in New Delhi as to whether I can go to the site of excavation at Ayodhya, examine the excavated remains and give my opinion. I readily agreed as it was a god-sent chance of my life to contribute my share of wisdom and knowledge towards the solution of a long-pending problem.

I along with Shri J.P. Joshi, retired D.G., A.S.I., visited the site on 6th and 7th of August, 2003, returned to New Delhi on 8th, the last day of excavation, prepared line sketches and notes on my observations and requested Shri Ashok Singhal to call a press conference so that truth about the evidences of temples below the disputed structure could be put before the public. This was necessary as all sorts of false propaganda were being released to the press by the other parties, totally ignoring professional ethics.

After the excavation report was submitted to the H'ble Court, the Central Board of Waqfs, U.P., and some other like-minded parties stated that the excavation report is totally biased, one sided, unscientific, etc., and hence should be rejected outright. Long sessions of arguments started to establish whether the report should be taken as a piece of evidence in the Court or not. In order to reply to the points raised by the experts of above mentioned parties, I was requested to put my arguments and points before the H'ble Court.

After I filed the affidavit, I was cross examined for 19 working days by Shri M.A. Siddiqui and Shri Z. Jilani.

The cross examination was done in a cordial atmosphere, though at the fag end some irrelevant and time-consuming questions were asked. This was just to prolong the arguments as the learned advocate was running short of genuine points. I am happy that I did my job to the satisfaction of the H'ble judges and the parties. I am also happy that my submission, mainly based on archaeological evidences unearthed, helped the Court to arrive at some conclusions. It is heartening to note that in spite of many frivolous submissions and arguments, ultimately archaeological evidences were found to be reliable. Even the experts of the opposing parties could not resist to accept the naked facts about the evidences of temples.

Justice D.V. Sharma in his judgment states “On the basis of the report of the Archaeological Survey of India massive structure of religious nature is required to be maintained as national monument under the Ancient Monuments Archaeological Site and Remains Act, 1958”. The Apex Court in *Rajiv Mankotia Vs. Secretary to the President of India and others* (AIR 1997 Supreme Court page 2766

at Para 21), directed the Government of India to maintain such national monuments. Thus, it is mandatory on the part of the Central Government to comply with the provisions of Act No. 24 of 1958 and ensure to maintain the dignity and cultural heritage of this country. To this I agree.

The order passed by the Court is “Accordingly, all three sets of parties, i.e. Muslims, Hindus and Nirmohi Akhara are declared joint title holders of the property / premises in dispute as described by letters ABC O E F in the map plan-I prepared by Shri Shiv Shankar Lal, Pleader /Commissioner appointed by Court in Suit No. 1 to the extent of one third share each for using and managing the same for worshipping. A preliminary decree to this effect is passed.

However, it is further declared that the portion below the central dome where at present the idol is kept in makeshift temple, will be allotted to Hindus in final decree.

It is further directed that Nirmohi Akhara will be allotted share including that part which is shown by the words Ram Chabutara and Sita Rasoi in the said map.

It is further clarified that even though all the three parties are declared to have one third share each, however if while allotting exact portions some minor adjustment in the share is to be made then the same will be made and the adversely affected party may be compensated by allotting some portion of the adjoining land which has been acquired by the Central Government.

The parties are at liberty to file their suggestions for actual partition by metes and bounds within three months.

List immediately after filing of any suggestion / application for preparation of final decree after obtaining necessary instructions from Hon’ble the Chief Justice.

Status quo as prevailing till date pursuant to Supreme Court judgment of Ismail Farooqui [1994(6) See 360] in all its minutest details shall be maintained for a period of three months unless this order is modified or vacated earlier.”

The parties have now gone to the Supreme Court.

Let us wait and see. I have gone through a small book titled “*Fact, Faith, Ayodhya - History and the Judgment of Allahabad High Court (Lucknow Bench) in the Ram Janmbhumi - Babri*

Masjid case” written by Aligarh Historians Society and published by Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) in 2010. The preface has been written by Prof. Irfan Habib, President of the Society on 2nd December 2010. Their main target appears to be Justice Sudhir Agrawal. I thought it to be a scholarly work written by so many stalwarts collectively. But I was disappointed; it is the work of a disgruntled, defeated army and as such it doesn’t deserve my rejoinder or reply.

Even Justice S.U. Khan in his gist of the findings says at point - 4 that “Mosque was constructed over the ruins of temples.”

Justice Sudhir Agarwal says:

- (1) The area covered under the central dome of the disputed structure is the birth place of Lord Rama as per faith and belief of Hindus;
- (2) The building in the dispute was constructed after demolition of Non-Islamic religious structure, i.e., a Hindu temple.

Justice D. V. Sharma says:

- (1) The disputed site is the birth place of Lord Ram. Place of birth is juristic person and is a deity. It is personified as the spirit of divine worshipped as birth place of lord Ram as a child.
- (2) The disputed building was constructed by Babar, the year is not certain but it was built against the tenets of Islam. Thus, it cannot have the character of mosque.

Author’s note:

It had no minarets and no *Vaju* tank, which are essential features of a mosque. It was constructed on a land not owned by Babar.

- (3) The disputed structure was constructed on the site of old structure after demolition of the same. The Archaeological Survey of India has proved that the structure was a massive Hindu religious structure.

RE-TELLING RAMAYANA: PERFORMING WOMEN IN RAMLILA OF RAMNAGAR

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When Simone de Beauvoir claims, “one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman,” she is appropriating and reinterpreting this doctrine of constituting acts from the phenomenological tradition. In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time - an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of act.

This paper will look at gender in performance and gender as performance. In other words, it will analyze the meanings produced through already-gendered bodies on stage and in audiences, as well as the construction of gender through performances on stage and in everyday life.

I will engage with two major theorists - Erving Goffman and Judith Butler - each of whom offers a different account of how performance constructs gender norms and makes gender real. I will apply the three theories in a case study of a mainstream performance tradition of Ramlila.

Ramlila, literally “Rama’s play”, is a performance of the *Ramayana* epic in a series of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue. This hugely popular festival falls on the 10th day of the waxing moon during the Hindu month of Ashvin (around September - October). It is performed across northern India. The most representative Ramlilas are those of Ayodhya, Ramnagar and Banaras, Vrindavan, Almora, Sattna and Madhubani.

The Ramlila at Ramnagar, Varanasi, is a unique theatrical and religious event, a month-long enactment of the Ramayana story which is now an annual tradition. The performance covers a whole town and involves an entire community from its Maharaja to thousands of common people. Ramlila is a sacred world of ritual drama, mask, pilgrimage and transformed geography. The lila ritual sacralizes the space in which it is done. One result of this sacralizing is that for the duration of the lila ritual, the ground becomes a “place of clarification”, a place where attention is focused to reveal significance.

Interestingly, there is an age-old tradition of only males acting in all the roles, including that of Sita and other female parts in the performance. In ancient times, when it was considered demeaning for women to go up on stage, men performed the female roles. This still happens in most parts of India. Needless to say, the most effeminate and ‘beautiful’ boy is handpicked to enact the role of Sita.

Ramayana still remains relevant. Anyone studying contemporary Indian society, politics and religion has a basic knowledge of *Ramayana*, its place in popular imagination and the ideological distortion that it has undergone at the hands of the Hindu nationalist in recent years. Quite a few studies on the *Ramayana* have concentrated on the religious, mythical and other approaches, but an interpretation wholly based on its gender dimension and ideological construction of the ‘ideal woman’ and the ‘castigated women’ or a study that looks at masculine and feminine as artificial constructs supported by imposed heterosexuality has not been done.

THE RAMAYANA AS THE INEXHAUSTIBLE SITE OF CULTURAL CONTEXTS

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Indian intellectual tradition, to take recourse to Pt. Jagannath Shastri, is like the perennial flow of the river Ganges. (*Bharatiya gyanaparampara sanatana gangapravaha.*) Valmiki's *Ramayana* constitutes the core of Indian intellectual tradition. It is an exhaustible site of cultural contexts, as different cultures and worlds converge in it. They include the world of gods, humans, demons, hermitage of sages and seers, forests full of creepers and creatures in the form of birds and animals, nature and culture among others. Moreover, every world has various layers inherent in them.

The *Ramayana* is built on the binaries of nature and culture, though there are many occasions when these binaries are scandalised. Nature remains the same, and culture changes from one community and society to another. However, one way of looking at culture is that it manifests itself on occasions when one transcends one's natural self and strives for higher values or ideals. Valmiki's *Ramayana* is unique among its other counterparts, as it is about *shoka*, sublimation of *shoka* into *shloka*. The *Ramayana* is not just the *ayana* of Rama but also, in the words of the Adi Kavi, '*shokaparayana*'. But it is not the *shoka* of the poet or of the individual self but for the wailing bird that in a way became the trope for Sita. Hence, though the epic is entitled as the march (*ayana*) of Rama, implicit in it is the fact that it throbs the untitled *Sitayana* of Valmiki. The concern, care and commitment for the other in the form of *dharma* or a sense of duty towards others like parents, brother, sister, subject, nature, and all other beings are the cultural values that become manifest in the course of the epic in the form of renunciation and sacrifice that begins with Rama's subscription to his father's wish and also in the form of devotion exemplified by, among others, Hanuman, Shabari and Lakshmana. It may be discerned in different ways, as Rama during the course of his exile goes to see different sages and rishis but never complains about anything wrong done to him by his step-mother. On the contrary, he uses the opportunity to learn from all sages who suggest to him to subscribe to the *shastras* and others like Jabali who ask him renounce *shastra*, and rather be guided by his own experience and observation. Thus the epic becomes a veritable complex of different schools of philosophy and their practice, and Rama, by not subscribing to the culture of complaints, transforms the period of *vanvas* into *gyanvas*.

Moreover, the *Ramayana* exists at multiple levels—religious, intellectual, philosophical, historical and cultural among others. It is a knowledge text, as traces and layers of many knowledge systems, including the discussion of architecture in the form of de-materialised architecture in the construction of the ‘*parn kutir*’ in Dandakavana by Lakshmana for Rama and Sita, as is being studied by the faculty and students of CEPT University, Ahmedabad.

The present paper aims at baring and studying various layers of cultural contexts of the *Ramayana* that make it a metonymic text for many *Ramayanas* in different languages in different periods and regions in India and beyond.

GLIMPSES OF RAMAYANA IN THE HYMNS OF SAIVA SAINTS OF TAMI NADU

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For the three saints who helped to establish Shiva worship while routing out Jainism and Buddhism in Tamil Nadu, Ravana's character is more appealing than that of Rama. These saints were of firm conviction that Lord Shiva is the supreme deity and there is no one else equal to or above him. The name Rama is mentioned only once in the hymns of Appar while Ravana is remembered in almost all the *patikams* of Appar and Sambanthar. The Saiva saints portray Ravana, the king of Lanka, as an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva and as a warrior king who tried to dislodge the Himalayas, the abode of Lord Shiva, punished, pardoned and blessed by the Almighty. They remind us that Lord Shiva subdued Ravana, who had an aerial chariot and a naval force, even without going to war with him. Other characters from the *Ramayana* are mentioned only in connection with their encounters with Ravana. Ravana defeated Kubera and captured his aerial vehicle Pushpaka which Ravana used for his own travels. The vulture Jatayu sacrificed his life while trying to stop Ravana from kidnapping Rama's wife. Sambanthar says one of the two vultures that worship Lord Shiva daily in Thirukalukunram is the brother of Jatayu, Sampathi who informed the whereabouts of Seetha to Hanuman. Vaali, the king of monkeys and a devotee of Lord Shiva, once subdued the twenty handed Ravana with his tail. Sambanthar claims in one of his hymns that Lord Shiva heeding to the prayers of Lakshmana, Jambavan, Sugreeva and Hanuman and saved them by consuming the venom produced by the demon. This claim has some resemblance to an incidence described in Valmiki's *Ramayana* although, according to Valmiki, it is Garuda who suddenly appeared in the sky and got rid of the arrow venom from the body of Rama and Laksmana. Rama did not know the creature that helped him. According to Valmiki, the bird tells him not to be curious about its identity and he will know of it once he has accomplished success in the battle. Sambanthar is convinced that the one who appeared as a bird in the sky to save Rama and his men from the demon's venom is none other than the supreme God Shiva himself. The saints also remind us that although Ravana was an unjust king, he was a devotee of Shiva, the one who pleased the Lord with his musical talents and was rewarded with a powerful sword by the Lord himself. Appar in his hymns lets us know that Ravana, the devotee of Lord Shiva, was punished for his crime by none other than Thirumal (Lord Vishnu) himself and not by an ordinary human being. Thirumal, after killing Ravana, built the Rameswaram temple to avoid the curse arising from the killing of Ravana. The Hindu saints have effectively used some of the main characters from the most popular story of Rama and Seetha to spread their message of kindness and glory of Shiva, the Supreme God.

ICONOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN RAMA WORSHIP: INSIGHTS FROM TECHNO-CULTURAL STUDIES OF BRONZES

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This paper attempts to explore some of the iconographic and chronological trends related to the worship of Rama in bronze and in relation to stone sculpture, with special reference to medieval southern India. The usefulness of archaeometric/archaeometallurgical and technical finger-printing of bronzes in terms of the identification of specific examples of bronze sculpture in collections of the Government Museum, Chennai, and Victoria and Albert Museum, London, are pointed out from a study of over 130 bronzes in these collections using techniques including lead isotope analysis. These studies helped in exploring the stylistic affiliations of specific examples of bronzes of Rama, Laxmana, Sita and Hanuman, in relation to aspects such as Chola or Vijayanagara attributions, possible South Indian or Sri Lankan provenance, issues of prevalence of Vaishnavite bronzes amongst South Indian bronzes. Iconometric aspects in relation to the modeling of Rama bronzes in stone and bronze are also explored, and in relation to temple sculpture bronzes and comparisons with iconographic aspects at temples such as the Hazara Rama temple at Hampi and Ramaswamy temple at Kumbakonam and others. An attempt is also made to trace the emergence of bronze *utsava murtis* or processional Rama in the context of overall emergence of Rama worship.

THE ART OF ADMINISTRATION AS DEPICTED IN VALMIKI RAMAYANA

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Human life represents progress from animalism to excellence - not a static, cyclic repetition of biological necessities. It is advancement from the transient to the permanent, from ignorance to wisdom and from mortality to life immortal. Progress is also a dual process of conserving the values that we have acquired and adding on to them in order to meet the contingencies and demands. This gives the motive behind the aspiration for wealth, which gives us the wherewithal to indulge in legitimate pleasures. To lead an integrated life without stress and tension, without jealousy, greed or hatred of fellowmen and in peace with outer Nature and the vicissitudes of fortune, we need a golden key, namely *Dharma*.

Lord Rama demonstrated that he had secured all these with this marvellous instrument. He symbolises *Dharma*. His life presents a real an integrated picture of vital satisfaction, aesthetic longings, social pleasures, fame and popularity. The appeal to hold the norms of righteous conduct, as contained in the epic, is irresistible. Those who read this mighty work will realise that *Dharma* is within the reach of all and it will secure all that a human being wants, if he chooses to follow the directives. Those who transgress these rules will miss the real pleasures of life. Sri Rama set his face against that wealth and power, which contravened the principles of *Dharma*. He declared” if my father’s promise necessitates my banishment, I am ready for it.” *Dharma* is the antiseptic that keeps away the toxins generated by unbridled longing for fame, etc. The Epic does not ask us to be poor but cautions that wealth should not “possess” us. Righteous conduct as portrayed by Sri Rama is the cementing factor, integrating the two values - power and desire. At the outset, the epic opens with the administrative setup prevalent in Ayodhya (capital city). Further, there are the following three situations where detailed and wholesome advice is rendered on the art of efficient administration. These are

1. King Dasharatha’s advice to Sri Rama on the eve of the coronation.
2. Sri Rama’s questions and advice to Bharata at their historic meeting at Chitrakuta
3. Surpanakha’s advice to Ravana.

The administrative setup in Ayodhya is designed to provide the maximum happiness for the maximum number of people for the maximum period, based as it is on the principles of *Dharma* - righteousness and moral values. In this context, the ancient and multifaceted Ramayana is very relevant today as the epic has very many lessons to offer in the Art of Administration. This paper attempts to highlight the Art of Administration culled out from the advises that we find scattered in abundance in this great and monumental epic.

THE DIDACTIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTERS OF RAMAYANA IN SANSKRIT LITERARY TRADITION

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Ramayana has great influence in Sanskrit literary tradition. It touches all the spheres of life. The didactic verses of Sanskrit are popular because of its clear ideas, manner of presentation and their message to the society. For example, “*Atirupaat dhrutaa sitaa ati garvaat ravano hatah ati daanat balirbaddhah sarvatra ati varjayet*”, means because of extreme beauty Sita was captured, because of extreme pride Ravana died, because of extreme charity Bali got bound, so in all places extremism should be avoided. The thought-provoking message for the present society is given in the above said verse with the help of the characters of *Ramayana* as well. The proposed research paper intends to work out to find out the impact of the characters of the *Ramayana* in Sanskrit literary tradition. The aim is to find out the viability of *Ramayana* through didactic verses in Sanskrit literary tradition in this present scenario.

RAMAYANA AND BHATTIKAVYA

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The *Ramayana* is in every sense the *Adi kavya* (first literature) and has been the model and fountainhead of all Sanskrit poetry and drama. It has also influenced and inspired the literature of other Indian languages.

For generations, the two *Itihasas*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, have moulded the national ideals and norms of conduct and character and the *dharma* cherished by the people of India. The *Ramayana* has spread its influence over religion, over literature (classical and regional), the arts (music, dance, drama sculpture, painting, architecture) and so on.

This paper will trace *Ramayana's* influence on Sanskrit poetry, specifically the *Bhattikavya* of Bhatti. The uniqueness of the text lies in the fact that using a well-known theme, the author has penned a beautiful poem at once explaining the rules of grammar and poetics.

Bhattikavya is written in the style of a *Mahakavya*, some of the characteristics of which are:

1. The hero should be noble
2. The theme should be from a well-known *Itihasa* or *Purana*
3. There should be long descriptions of nature and the like
4. The *kavya* should abound in *rasas* (sentiments), *alankaras* (embellishments) and so on.

Not much is known about the author Bhatti. Commentators roughly fix his date as the 7th century AD. His *kavya* can be called a *dvayaasraya kaavya*:

1. Dealing with the story of Rama
2. Teaching the rudiments of grammar

It is to Bhatti's credit that he succeeds in this dual purpose to a great extent.

Bhatti never mentions anywhere his dual purpose. Selecting a few *adhikaaras* of Panini, he introduces *Prakirna slokas* at intervals for the sake of brevity and lucidity.

Commentators have divided *Bhattikavya* into four *kandas* dealing with miscellaneous rules, Panini's specific rules, *alankaras* both *sabda* and *artha* and verbal forms of the nine *lakaras*.

Given the fact that Bhatti was intent on teaching grammar through his *kavya*, it is surprising that his style is not obscure or artificial. In fact, the narrative flows easily. *Prasada* or lucidity rules everywhere barring the verses where Bhatti illustrates *yamaka* or alliteration. Long compounds are few and carefully chosen to augment the effect of Vira or Raudra *rasa*.

The use of a variety of rare words and word formations bears ample testimony to Bhatti's command over Sanskrit language.

Bhatti's dialogues are crisp and interesting. For example, Malyavan's appeal to Ravana to send back Sita. Sita's speech during her *Agnipariksa* brings out her self-respect and self confidence.

Like Valmiki, Bhatti uses the short metres like *anustub* and the longer *indravajra* and *upendra* admirably. But he excels in suiting the sound to the sense and metres are employed very appropriately by him.

In conclusion, Bhatti himself says:

dipatulyah prabandho ayam sabdalaksanacaksusam I
hastamarsah ivandhanam bhavet vyakaranadrte II

'This composition is like a lamp for those who possess the eye of grammar; without grammar it may be like the touch of the hand of the blind.'

It cannot be denied that Bhatti was highly indebted to Valmiki and the *Ramayana* both for story content and style. At the same time, it would not be wrong to say that Indian tradition and Bhatti's commentators regard his poem as a Mahakavya and Bhatti as a Mahakavi.

RAMAYANA AND THE WORKS OF MAHAMAHOPADHYAYA SRI LAKSHMANA SURI

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'*Aadikavyam Ramayanam*' has been the steady source of inspiration for the poets of all ages is true for 20th century as well. Mahakavis like Bhasa, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti and others were attracted towards the *kathavastu* of *Ramayana* and exhibited their skill in weaving magical creations narrating the whole story or highlighting a certain episode. It is needless to point out the 'super stardom' secured by these kavis because of this. This tradition is kept alive in modern times too, where the kavi, Sri Lakshmana Suri of Madras, who was the son of Muthu Subba Iyer of Punalveli near Srivilliputtur in Ramnad, 1859-1919, wrote many works: *Prapanna Vibhishanam*, *Paulastya Vadham*, *Gayatri Ramayanam*, *Ramayana Sangraha*, etc. His unquenching thirst is evident in the fact that apart from authoring many plays, *laghu kavyas* and *maha kavyas*, he wrote a commentary to *Uttara rama charitam*, *Mahavira charitam* and *Anarga Raghavam*.

In *Paulastya Vadham*, the simple style of developing the story is commendable. Despite adhering to the original plot, the author deviates whenever he feels the necessity and introduces *Garbha natika* or *Antar natika* in the final Act.

Khanda kavya Prapanna Vibhishanam is divided into two parts as *purva bhaga* that includes Vibhishana's advice, Indrajit's reply and the expulsion of Vibhishana from Lanka. *Uttara bhaga* deals with the Saranagati of Vibhishana to Rama and Rama's subsequent reaction.

Lakshmana Suri, author of *Sri Gayatri Ramayana*, has used the poetic acrobatics and formed every verse by starting with every syllable of the *Gayatri mantra*. Verses couched in Sragdhara metre indicate the propriety of offering a garland to Savitr and Rama. *Gayatri mantra* is recited by the pious and religious Hindus with utmost reverence and faith every day. Similar is the case of the *Ramayana*, the recitation of which is a regular feature on all auspicious occasions. *Gayatri mantra* discovered by Visvamitra is uttered to gain power which is believed to enhance the intelligence of a person. This *mantra* power coupled with *Ramayana* should be the most sought after one. This *Gayatri Ramayana* that has all the *kandas* of *Ramayana* rendered in 25 *slokas*, the first of which starts with the *Pranava mantra*

OM and the next 24 *slokas* use the 24 syllables in conformity with the *Gayatri mantra*, one in each *sloka*.

Suri excels as commentator too. Out of many, his commentary to *Mahavira charitam* and *Uttara rama charitam* of Bhavabhuti, *Anargaraghavam* of Murari and *Balaramayana* of Rajasekhara are taken up here since they are based on the story of *Ramayana*. Since a commentator on Sanskrit works is expected to possess mastery over dramaturgy, *alankara sastra*, the epics, grammar, lexicography and other related subjects, this paper tries to highlight on these things and an analysis of Suri as a commentator is also attempted.

CHARACTERISATION OF SRI RAMA IN MANDODARI CHATUSLOKI

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The story of *Ramayana* is loveable to every human being. Sage Narada in his *Sankshepa Ramayana* narrates several traits of Rama to Sri Valmiki. At the instance of Brahma, Valmiki authored the *Ramayana*. Valamiki narrates the good attributes of Sri Rama with the voice of King Dasaratha, Kausalya, Sita, Risis, Surpanaka, Maricha, Mandodari and so on in all *kandas*.

I wish to present a paper on the characterisation of Rama, who is an incarnation of Sriman Narayana, as enlightened by Mandodari, the principal wife of Ravana, in four *slokas*, called *Mandodari Chatusloki*. These four *slokas* from 14 to 17 are in *Yuddha kanda*, Chapter 114. The inner thoughts of Mandodari as hidden in these four *slokas* were beautifully unearthed by the famous 13th century Sri Vaishanva commentator Krishnasuri, otherwise called Periya Vachchan Pillai in his text *Tanisloki manipravala* commentary.

In the battlefield, when Ravana was killed by Rama, the sobbing widow Mandodari bewailed the loss of her husband Ravana. Valmiki, with a view to know the supremacy of Rama, cleverly introduces women like Tara and Mandodari to pronounce the supremacy of Rama. Here, Periyavachchan Pillai says that Valmiki's idea is similar to people singing songs while segregating the chaff from the grain to ease themselves of their exhaustion. Likewise, to get relief from the sorrow of death of Ravana, Mandodari proclaims the supremacy of Rama. In other words, Pillai says that as soon as she came to the battlefield, for a moment she degraded Rama while praising Ravana for his prowess in the battlefield and after sometime she got revelation and started proclaiming the supremacy of Rama. In these four *slokas*, Mandodari outpours all the good attributes of Rama, twenty in number, revealing the greatness of Rama, His beauty, His attributes and His Deeds.

In the first sloka, Mandodari says that she knows that who Rama actually is. He is the greatest of yogis, Paramatma, timeless and the one truth, which has neither a beginning nor a middle nor an end. He is the Eternal. He is the greatest of the great. In the sloka, for the word mahayogi, Pillai explains the word *yogi* as possessor of attributes and the abode of attributes, besides giving five types of meaning on the basis of *Amarakosa*.

Pillai narrates the name *Mahatma*, which is appropriate for Rama in many ways. According to *Vaijayanti* lexicon, the word *atma* in *Paramatma* has ten meanings. They are *aatma jive* (soul), *dhruta* (courage), *dehe* (Divya Mangala Vighraha), *svabhava* (nature), *paramatmani* (supreme), *yatne* (Perseverance), *arkddha* (sun), *agnau* (fire), *mati* (knowledge), *vaate* (wind). These are appropriately analysed by Pillai in his commentary.

Pillai explains the word with authoritative references from the *Ramayana* and other ancient texts. This would be a unique paper wherein I will attempt to bring out how Periyavachchan Pillai lucidly expresses the inner thought of Mandodari in four *slokas* on the characterisation of Rama.

PLIGHT OF SITA IN CHUDAMANI EPISODE - A STUDY

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The cultural heritage of India is based on *Vedas*, *Itihasas* and *Puranas*. From this point of view, *Valmiki Ramayana* occupies the foremost position among *Itihasas*. Alwars, twelve in number, the early torchbearers of Sri Vaishnavism, were influenced by the *Ramayana* and poured hymns on Rama also. The first millennium enjoyed the essence of *Valmiki Ramayana* and Alwars hymns. Later, in the fag end of the first millennium, Sri Vaishnava Acharyas studied the *Ramayana* deeply.

Both these texts influenced Kamban, to write in spotless Tamil, the story of *Ramayana*, called *Ramavataram*. His magnum opus work was released in the presence of Sriman Nathamunigal, a great Vaishnavite, in the precinct of Goddess Ranganayaki *sannidhi* in Srirangam.

Kamba Ramayanam was extensively narrated with lofty meanings during 1960s by the famous Tamil Scholar V.M. Gopalakrishnamacharya of Triplicane. Although there is awareness of *Kamba Ramayana* in Tamil Nadu, I am attempting to bring out the inner thoughts of some characters, particularly Sita, as minutely dealt with by Kamban.

Sundara kanda narrates meeting Sita; Hanuman's joy knew no bounds. Somehow, he equipped himself to meet her and after a long time, he began to talk freely with Sita. The *Chudamani* section consists of 89 poems. It is very interesting to note that this section has as much importance as one can witness in a lengthy conversation between Sita and Hanuman. This section begins with Hanuman suggesting that he will carry Sita to the place of Rama. She refutes this suggestion and insists that Rama should take her back after killing Ravana, thereby bringing more glory to an already glorious Raghuvamsa. Hanuman abides by this and asks her the message to be conveyed to Rama. Here, the central theme of the *Chudamani* episode reflects the plight of Sita, wherein she says that she will not survive for more than one month, before which Sri Rama should rescue her. This is the plight of Sita and supporting this statement she conveys other messages also to Hanuman in ten poems. Having heard Sita's statement, Hanuman grows enthusiastic and Sita adds some episodes about when she was with Sri Rama, particularly the episode of Kakasura who troubled her and how Rama reacted to it, in six poems. In three poems, she establishes her virtuousness by revealing that Ravana carried her with the ground where she was standing, without

touching her. This results in Rama believing her virtue. Here, Kamban safeguards the tradition of women. Further, she gives the sacred *Chudamani* that was safeguarded in her cloth and Kamban describes the greatness of the *Chudamani* in two poems.

This paper will deal with all the nuances of the commentary of V.M. Gopalakrishnamacharya on the *Chudamani* episode.

**RAMANAYANA PANEL SCULPTURES FROM TIRUCHENAMPOONDI,
PULLAMANGAI AND OTHER EARLY CHOLA TEMPLES IN
TAMIL NADU**

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The *Ramayana* panel sculptures are noticed in the Chola temples at Tiruchenampoondi (Thanjavur district), Pullamangai (Thanjavur district) and Pachil Amaleswarar temple Alagiyamanavalam (Tiruchy district) in Tamil Nadu. This paper highlights the similarities and differences of *Ramayana* scenes found in the panel sculptures of these temples.

AXIOMS AS IDIOMS AND PROVERBS - RAMAYANA INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY

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There may be many reasons which account for the lasting character of the literary works of diverse nature, such as: (i) The heroic exploits of the heroes which are a source of inspiration to the people at large, (ii) any great event of history with far-reaching consequences, (iii) the diverse natures of the characters, their peculiarities, their aims and achievements, their struggles and successes as well as failures and their final ends which are depicted in a lively manner, (iv) axioms (or) universal truths which are advanced in any literary work as generalisations to instruct the people indirectly but effectively and which may develop into idioms (or) proverbs and (v) making others feel the richness of imaginations and the provoking of sentiments in the minds of the men of taste. There may be more reasons which lend lasting character to any literary work.

The *Ramayana* of Valmiki – one of the two great epics of India – has moulded the national character of India right from the time of its creation to the present day. It ‘is the only mighty creation in the world literature which has had a fascinating evolution, changing from time to time and people to people.’ More than everything, the *Ramayana* has gained eternal glory substantially by the above mentioned factors. But here, this paper shall restrict itself to the examination of some of the axioms related to *Ramayana* that have shaped themselves into idioms and proverbs in all languages on India, specifically Tamil.

The axioms of the *Ramayana* have forcibly attracted the minds of people and got firmly implanted in them; as a result they render invaluable service in spreading some moral ideas (or) political wisdom (or) in making people follow a particular course of action. Since axioms are mainly based on human experience in general, they convince people and effectively mould their behaviour also.

Based on some episodes from the *Ramayana* many idioms and proverbs in Tamil have come about and are popular among the South Indian families. For example:

1. The great efforts that Bhagiratha made to bring River Ganga to earth, is famously used among the people as an idiom: ***Bhagiratha prayatna***, to extol the herculean efforts of a person.

2. The axiom that ‘though a person can wish for even the moon, but will get only what he deserves’, has given rise to the idiom: ***Trisanku svarga***. This is based on the episode of Trisanku, who in spite of the efforts of Sage Visvamitra could reach only a intermediate region between heaven and earth as he did not deserve the heavenly abode.
3. The famous proverb: ***Thanthai sol mikka mandiram illai*** is based on the fact that Rama dutifully obeyed his father’s words and went on an exile without a back answer. The children of India are taught to obey their father in the same way.

This paper strives to thus co-relate such Tamil idioms and proverbs to their relevant episode from the *Ramayana* and highlight the influence of *Ramayana* on society.

**UTTARAKHAND IN AVANI: SITA'S LIFE IN EXILE
AND THE CHOLAS' RELIGIOUS POLICY IN THE AFTERMATH
OF THE GOVINDARAJA CONTROVERSY (1186-1279)**

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Avani is a small idyllic village near Mulbagal town in Kolar district of Karnataka where the locals believe the *Ramayana* was actually written. It has everything from Sage Valmiki's *ashrama* to the hill where Sita lived and brought up her children Luv and Kush. The hill has a temple dedicated to her. The place is rife with legends relating to the *Ramayana*. From the time of the Nolambas, Avani's spiritual importance was showcased. It continued when the Cholas conquered this place and Southern Karnataka. In 1116 C.E., the Cholas lost their Karnataka possession to the rising power of the Hoysalas. In 1186 C.E., during the reign of Kulothunga III, they gained foothold in the Kolar district of Southern Karnataka and the Emperor who had removed the Govindaraja image from the shrine of Chidambaram while renovating the temple, as stated by Kulothunga Cholan Ula and as attested by Nilakanta Sastri, sent two of his chieftains: Ilavanjirayar and Chola Gangan to conquer and rule the place on his behalf. Out of these Ilavanjirayar formed a kingdom in Avani. The attempt to conquest was not only political but was also religious. Ilavanjirayars renovated the old temple of Lord Rama and in 1200 built a temple complex wherein the brothers of Lord Rama had a shrine each and all of them were worshipped in the form of the Shivling. The temple was called Tiruviramiswaram Udaiya Nayanar. They maintained a number of Vishnu shrines in and around the area. Throughout their reign they remained Vishnu worshippers but all the temples had the suffix 'Nayanar' and avataars of Vishnu were worshipped in the form of the Shivling. This compromise worked and favored Kulothunga politically; the Cholas and the Hoysalas made peace and entered into a matrimonial alliance which paved way for much desired peace in the region. Avani continued to be a spiritual centre long after the Cholas and the Hoysalas. A century ago, the temple was called Ekanta Rameshwar Temple. Now it is called Rameshwar temple. This and the temple for Sita and a place identified as Valmiki's ashram are all are under the patronage of the Shringeri mutt filling a gap in history which is not widely known.

RAMAYANA MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS

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The *Adi-kavya, Ramayana* composed by Valmiki at the sight of the grief stricken kraunca bird, stands as an inspiration to mankind in all aspects of life – literature and arts, especially music. All these have developed immensely nourished by this single epic.

The original *Ramayana* itself was set to literary and musical standards. Also in the *Ramayana (Balakanda)*, Valmiki himself sought Kusa-Lava to propagate the *kavya* as they were skilled musicians and endowed with sweet voices.

The *Ramayana* is not only a *kavya* but also an important religious text for Indians. This text laid the seed for the *Bhakti* cult. *Bhakti* in turn has produced many composers in music. Many or almost all music composers have been inspired by the epics and especially *Ramayana*.

In Sanskrit literature, the *mahakavya, khandakavya, campu* and drama have in majority, *Ramayana* as their theme. The *khandakavya* such as the *Astapadi, Krsnakarnamrtam*, etc. are generally set to musical notes. The *Ekasloki* – namely the entire story in one *sloka* - also are popular with respect to epics and *Bhagavatam*. Not only Sanskrit but all regional literature also source inspiration from *Ramayana*, as the *Kamba Ramayana* in Tamil, *Pampa Ramayana* in Kannada, *Tulasidas Ramayana* in Hindi and so on.

These have strongly influenced *vaggeyakas* or musical composers who have sung the praise of Rama and his *leela* in many compositions. Of these are lyrics which have the entire *Ramayana* in a nutshell, such as: Muthusvami Diksitar's *Ramachandraya, Rama astapadi* of Rama kavi of Tiruvisainallur, *Bhavayami* of Svati Tirunal, *Namo namo raghukula* of Annamacarya, *Ramacharita geetam* of Papanasam Sivan, *Suddha brahma paratpara ram*, etc.

Arunachalakavi also has a composition on Ranganatha describing the story of Rama and Krishna in two paragraphs of '*en palli kondir ayya*'. This song in two paragraphs narrates first, Rama's story and later Krishna's story. '*Mudi ondru muvulagamum andukondu*' and '*mannu pugazh kosalai than mani vayiru vaaitavane*' are well-known songs of great writers.

Ramayana has influenced Tamilians to such level that we have songs like *Sundara kanda kummi pattu*, *Ramayana sindhu* and others. *Ramayana*'s influence is felt heavily in the field of cinema also. Here to songs like *Jagam pugazhum punya kadai ramanin kadai* and *Raman etthanai ramanadi*, etc. narrate the entire story of the *Ramayana*.

A few of the above mentioned compositions are focused in this paper analysing their literary nuances, deviations if any and the *bhava* of the composers as depicted in the compositions.