



## Rameshwaram, The Anchor Of Indian Renaissance 4

### Ramayana ... rooted in the land, rooted in the minds

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The charm of the Valmiki Ramayana has perpetuated throughout the history and it was rewritten in several localised versions in and outside India.

Rama-katha was incorporated in Buddhist Jatakas. Sanskrit or Pali versions of Ramayana got translated in Chinese. Pali Dashratha Jataka was narrated to a landlord who was mourning his son's death. Another Jataka, Boddhisattwa replaces Rama and Naga replaces Ravana, but rest is strikingly same. To the extent that Naga comes in sanyasi disguise to take away queen of Bodhisattwa. The Nidana of king 'Ten luxuries' refers to Dashratha who ruled in Yen-bu-dai meaning Jambudwip i.e. India. Indonesia had regular contact with the mainland especially since Gupta period around 5<sup>th</sup> A.D. In Java there are two famous groups of temples, Prambaran and Pranataran. The former is more influenced by Indian style and has many scenes from Ramayana. (Ramayana in Asia, Harish Kumar Chaturvedi, India's Contribution to the world Thought and Culture, p.181) Indonesia now is a Muslim majority nation, but has Ramayana as national text.



Carvings of Ramayana and Jataka

(See more examples in <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2014/05/the-ramayana-in-southeast-asia-4-indonesia-and-malaysia.html>)

A tribe in Assam, Karbi's claim that they are descendents of Sugriva. They came to Assam while searching for Sita mata, Purthemi kungrepi. They could not return to Ayodhya and so settled there. Sabin Alun, the Karbi version of Ramayana records this. Karbi, Jayantiya, Dimasas are acquainted with Ram-katha. (<http://www.sanskritimagazine.com/india/north-east-tribals-connection-ancient-india/>)

Following is an excerpt from a research paper at IGNCA's Workshop on Ramayana Tradition in Manipur By [Dr.Kailash Kumar Mishra](#) on February 28, 2008 ([http://ignca.nic.in/ne\\_0003.htm](http://ignca.nic.in/ne_0003.htm))

'The theme of Ramayana has permeated to almost all religions, faiths and languages of India and almost all regions of South-east Asia and East Asia. It has also reached Philippines, Japan and Mongolia,' he states. However, he pointed out, "the story of Rama varies from region to region, from language to language and from culture to culture. When adapted, the Valmiki Ramayan by different languages, it takes a local colour."



Citing the Ramayana in Sanskrit, Bhusundi Ramayana, Adhyatma Ramayana, Ananda Ramayana and Adbhuta Ramayana, Jhalajit stated that the source of inspiration of all is the Valmiki Ramayan. Some of the variations found in these Ramayana include, “How many heads did Ravana have?” “Who killed Ravana?” Adbhuta Ramayana says Sita killed Ravana. “Whose daughter was Sita?” Jhalajit said that original Ramayana of Valmiki must be taken while observing the deviations in the comparative study of Ramayana in different literatures of Asia.

Ram-charita-manas, popularly called Tulsi Ramayana after the name of the author is the contemporary of Manipuri King Khagemba who reigned from 1597 to 1652. Some of the deviations in Ram-charita-manas from Valmiki Ramayana are that Lord Rama is Lord Vishnu himself; the treatment of the marriage of Lord Rama and Sita are different; Lakshman makes certain remarks to his father after he learns that Lord Rama has been exiled; Tulsidas omits the uncharitable remarks made by Sita to Lakshman when the latter did not go to rescue Lord Rama who had gone to bring the deer.

Krittibasi Ramayana is held in great veneration in Bengal and Manipur as Tulsidas Ramayana in North India. Called Waari Liba in Manipur and Kathaka in Bengal, the tradition of narrating Ramayana is based on Krittibasi Ramayana. The most serious discrepancy between Valmiki Ramayana and Krittibasi Ramayana is the episode of Durga Puja.

Manipuri Ramayana, which is basically Krittibasi Ramayana, adapted to suit the Vaishnavite temperament of the Manipuri society. During the reign of Meidingu Garibniwaj, the only available Ramayana in Manipur was that of Krittibas, which was written so that Bengalis could read Ramayana in their mother tongue. The Ramayana was adapted in Manipuri in record time by Kshema Singh and his team.

While making a reference to the Manipur Ramayana, the resource person RK Jhalajit Singh said that the Chandrajini, which is one of the favourite additions of the Manipuri version of Ramayana, does not figure in any of the Ramayanas of the other part of the world. Hence, there must be a collective effort to write and publish the Chandrajini episode of the great epic so that other communities would have the privilege to read and appreciate this story.’

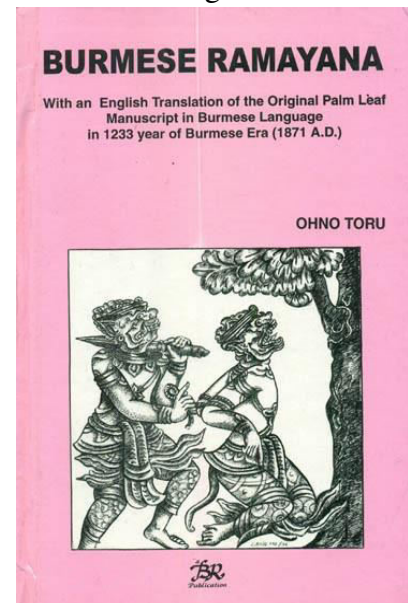
Kamban's Ramayan is perhaps the most famous Ramayana in the South India. He follows the Valmiki Ramayana but there are also major divergences, one being the manner in which Ravana abducted Sita.

In Indonesia: Around 5th Century AD, there was a kingdom called Dang-Ya in Malay Peninsula during which the Ramayana could have found roots as trades prevailed with India and China by sea then. The belief is that Ramayana spread to Java, which struck firm in Java. There is a complete Ramayana Epic in Old Javanese language dated in the 6th Century AD. Many scholars opine that Bhakti Kavya is the source of Javanese Ramayana.

In Thailand: The Ramayana is still popular in Thailand. The best Ramayana we know of is Ramkien written by King Rama I of Siam now called Thailand. Ramkien is derived from the Sanskrit word Ram Kirti meaning the fame of Rama. It is placed in late 18th Century, to be precise it was written round about 1798. The Ramayana traditions in Thailand came mainly from Indonesia. The capital of Thailand as named Ayuthia, a corruption of Ayodhya. It was because of the influence of Ramayana in Thailand that the first king of Ayuthia was named Rama. Many kings of Thailand had the name of Rama, the first king is known as Rama I.

Besides Rama I, many scholars composed different Ramayanas. But one thing that strikes us is each of the Ramayana is divided into seven cantos as in Valmiki Ramayana. The story of Rama is taught in schools. Ramayana in Thailand also has major variations. Hanuman is a celibate or a bal-brahmachari, never married. In Thailand, Hanuman married many times.

In Burma (Myanmar): Burma has the greatest affinity with India in Ramayana literature. The earliest Burmese Ramayana so far discovered is Ram Vatthu. It was written in the 17th Century. Burmese scholars say that Ramayana literature came from Indonesia. Oral traditions of Ramayana in Burma began in the 11th Century. Ramayana is found in Burmese literatures in prose, poetry and drama. Of all the books on the Ramayana theme written outside India Ram Vatthu of Burma is nearest to Valmiki Ramayana.



Ramayana indeed is rooted not just in our land, but in our minds, in our deepest self. Rameshwaram is setu, a bridge between mainland India and the South east and West Asia in more than one sense. It is said that where-ever this Indian mind went, it took Ramayana with it.

Undoubtedly, the eternal battle between pious and jealous, purity and vanity, righteous and superfluous will be fought till the race is on the planet, and till then Ramayana will be reigning in every sensitive mind.

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