CHAPTER - IV

RAMAYANA

Ramayana is one of the few great epics of ancient India and the story of Rama is ranked as one of the most popular stories in India and South Asia. The name Ramayana is a compound of two words: Rama and yana meaning “vehicle” translating to the “vehicle of Rama” or “Rama's Journey”. Ramayana narrates the journey and adventures of the hero Rama, the prince of Ayodhya who is possibly an incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu to annihilate vice. In the Indian tradition, Rama lived in Treta Yug, the second of the four eons (yuga) of Hindu chronology (Buck and Nooten xxi). Traditionally, Ramayana is attributed to the Sanskrit poet Srimad Valmiki. The Sanskrit version of Ramayana, dating to approximately the 5th to 4th century B.C is known to be “the most extensive early literary treatment of the life of Rama”. Asserting this, Paula Richman writes in her introduction to Many Ramayanas:

Many later Ramayana authors explicitly refer to it either as an authoritative source or as a telling with which they disagree. For centuries it has been regarded as the most prestigious Ramayana text in many Indian circles. It has also drawn the most attention from western scholars (5).

Robert P. Goldman the general editor of a new English translation of Valmiki’s Ramayana, says:

Few works of literature produced in any place at any time have been as popular, influential, imitated, and successful as the great and ancient Sanskrit epic poem, the Valmiki Ramayana (x).

This version of Ramayana is composed of verses called Sloka in Sanskrit language. Valmiki used the meter called Anustup for versification. These verses are grouped into chapters called Sargas which narrates an episode or intent. Sargas themselves are grouped into books called Kaandas. Kaanda, meaning the inter-node stem of sugar cane, refers to a particular phase or an event of the story in the course of story telling.

The Valmiki Ramayana is a 24,000 couplet-long epic poem over the years, additional verses and stories have been inspired especially during the medieval Bhakti period when several bhasha versions were composed. Efforts of textual scholars showed that some portions of Book I Bala Kanda, and the entire Uttara Kaanda which narrates Sita’s expulsion to forest, appear to be later
additions (Sundararajan 106) possibly during the 2nd century BC or later (Chaurasia 38). Moreover, according to Goldman, “the main body of the narrative lacks statements of Rama's divinity and identifications of Rama with Vishnu are rare and subdued even in the later parts of the text” (45) Along with Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, there are hundreds of other tellings and renderings of the story of Rama to be found in India, Southeast Asia, and beyond (Richman 7). Three famous renderings of the epic include *Shri Rama Panchali* or *Krittivasi Ramayan* by Krittibas Ojha in Bengali (15th century), *Ramayana of Kampan* or *Iramavataram* in Tamil (11th-12th century), and *Ramcharitamanas* by Tulsidas in Awadhi, an eastern form of Hindi (16th century) (Sundararajan 106).

**Protagonists:**

**Rama** is the central and the hero of the epic. He is believed to be the seventh incarnation of god Vishnu. In the story Rama is the eldest son and heir of the King of Ayodhya but was sent into exile for fourteen years.

**Laxmana** is the younger brother of Rama and the second of the bore princess of Ayodhya and believed to be incarnation of the Sheshanāga associated with Vishnu. Laxmana was loyal to his brother and accompanied him in his long exile.

**Sita** is the adored wife of Rama and the incarnation of goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu. She followed Rama into exile but was abducted by Ravana. From this point the epic narrates Rama’s war with Ravana for the release of Sita.

**Dasharatha** is Rama’s father and the king of Ayodhya. He had three queens: Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, and four sons: Rama, Bharata and twins Laxmana and Shatrughna.

**Kaikeyi** is Dasharatha's queen and Bharata’s mother. When everything was prepared for Rama’s coronation as heir apparent, Kaikeyi forced Dasharatha to declare Bharata as a king and send Rama into exile.

**Bharata** is the third son of Dasharatha and Rama’s brother. When he heard what his mother had done he refused to crown. He went into the woods to request Rama’s return. When Rama refused
to come back as that would have dishonored his father, Bharata carried Rama’s sandals the throne and ruled as Rama's regent.

**Sugreeva** is the King of the monkeys who was banished by his brother Vali. He promised to help Rama locate Sita if Rama helps him to defeat Vali.

**Hanuman** is a huge and powerful ape considered the son of the god of the Winds Vayu. He found Sita in Lanka and played an important role in fighting Ravana.

**Ravana** is the powerful king of Lanka. He is a rakshasa described as having ten heads and twenty arms. He received a boon from Parameshwara that he couldn’t be killed by gods, demons, or spirits. This boon did not include the human being. Ravana abducted Sita with the help of the rakshasa Maricha and carried her to Lanka. In the ensuing battle, Ravana was killed by Rama.

**Synopsis of the Epic**

The Valmiki’s *Ramayana* has been arranged into six books or kanda, which are:
- Bala Kanda (Book of Youth) [77 chapters]
- Ayodhya Kanda (Book of Ayodhya) [119 chapters]
- Aranya Kanda (Book of Forest) [75 chapters]
- Kishkindha Kanda (The Empire of Holy Monkeys) [67 chapters]
- Sundara Kanda (Book of Beauty) [68 chapters]
- Yuddha Kanda (Book of War) [128 chapters]

**Bala Kanda**

Bala Kanda starts with the story of king Dasharatha who had three queens but no children. He was advised to perform a *Putra-Kameshti Yagya*. As a consequence, Rama and his three brothers are born. Nowadays in India Rama's birthday is celebrated as Ramanavami. In another trajectory (not in Valmiki’s text), Janaka the king of Mithila and Sita’s father organized a ‘Swayamvara’ for Sita and declared that whoever could string the bow bestowed upon heir by Shiva would marry Sita. Rama was the only one who could wield the bow and this led their marriage.
Valmiki’s *Ramayana* describes Rama lifting and stringing the mighty bow while visiting Janaka with Visvamitra.

**Ayodhya Kanda**

Soon Dasharatha felt it was time to give the reins of the kingdom to Rama. But Kaikeyi whose jealousy has been aroused by her servant claimed two boons that Dasharatha had long ago promised her. She asked that Rama should be exiled for fourteen years, and her son Bharata to become king.

**Aranya Kanda**

Rama, Sita and Laxmana settle in the forest. Maricha assumed the form of a golden deer to sure Rama and Laxmana providing opportunity for Ravana to Steal Sita away. Searching for Sita, Rama and Laxmana met ascetic Shabari who led them to Sugriva and Hanuman.

**Kishkindha Kanda**

The story continues in Kishkindha Kanda when Rama and Laxmana meet Hanuman. Hanuman directes them to Sugreeva, the King of the monkeys, who was banished by his brother Vali. Rama helps him to defeat Vali. When Sugreeva regained the kingdom, he sent four groups to the four sides of the earth, searching for Sita. Finally Hanuman located Sita in Ravana’s garden in Lanka.

**Sundara Kanda**

This book as Goldman (3) says forms the heart of Valmiki's *Ramayana*. The Sundara Kanda narrates the adventures of Hanuman who finds Sita after a long search. He shows her the signet ring of Rama and received her own ring for Rama. He allowed himself to be captured and before leaving Lanka, sets fire to the city.

**Yuddha Kanda**

The last book of *Ramayana* describes the great war between Rama and his ape army with Ravana’s forces. After a long war, Rama kills Ravana and recovers Sita. Finally, Rama accompanied by Sita, Laxmana and Hanuman return to Ayodhya where they are welcomed by
the people. Rama becomes the king and rules the earth for ten thousand years very morally and ethically.

Variations of Ramayana

One of the common features of the ‘oral epic’ is the variation of the story. Significantly no epic in the world has as many versions as Ramayana. Frank E. Reynolds asserts that “in the history and literature of religions few stories have been told in as many different ways as the story of Rama” (50). Within India there exist multiple versions of the Ramayana. In the neighboring countries of Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Vietnam, China and Maldives, many Rama-stories exist with different names. Srinivasa Iyengar in his introduction to Asian Variations in Ramayana writes:

What is perhaps even more astonishing than the universal vogue and the great role of the Ramayana in India is the general diffusion of the story all over the world. Even as, in India, the Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina and other Ramayana versions vary from one another, just as the numberless folk renderings and evocations in the plastic and the performing arts reveal a tantalising versatility in the handling of the Rama-Sita-Ravana theme, the legend has likewise undergone countless variations in the process of diffusion or transplantation abroad to the several far-Hung countries of Asia (2).

Camille Bulcke counted three hundred tellings of the epic in various genres. Actually, more than 300 versions of the Ramayana are identified as extant (Ramanujan 32). Among all, the Sanskrit Ramayana attributed to the sage Valmiki is known to be the oldest text. This version has served as the base adapting or translating into many regional languages (bhasha). But as A.K. Ramanuja explains, “it is not always Valmiki’s narrative that is carried from one language to another” (25).

Some of these regional versions of the Ramayana written by various authors differ from each other in important manners. These authors have either adapted the Valmiki Ramayana and transformed it to suit their own culture, lifestyle and tradition, or translated into the various regional languages in India. Most of these Ramayana versions are not considered as merely literal translations; instead they have their own linguistic richness and poetic style. In “Top 15 Popular Version of Ramayana” the entries are arranged according to their period.
To mention some of the significant examples of the Ramayana story, the 7th century Bhattikavya by Bhatti is a Sanskrit rendering of the epic. As noted before, Bhattikavya is one of the sixth paradigmatic example of Kāvya poetry and the earliest example of an "instructional poem" or śāstra-kāvya. As literature, it stands comparison with the best of Sanskrit poetry. Ravanavadha (the death of Ravana) is an alternative title of Bhattikavya. It is not possible that this was the original title as the death of Ravana is only a part of the whole poem. Bhattikavya may get this title to separate it from other works which relate the death of Ravana. Bhattikavya of Bhatti is a version including descriptions of cities, mountains, the rising and setting of the sun and the moon, the ocean and the sports, love and sex. The poem exemplifies Sanskrit grammar and poetics and rhetoric (Narang website).

The 12th century Iramavataram, also known as a Kampan Ramayanam, written by Kampan is the Tamil version of the tale. Although Ramavatharam is based on Valmiki’s Ramayana, it differs from the Sanksrit text in many aspects - both in spiritual concepts and in the specifics of the story line. This work is considered as one of the greatest literary works in Tamil literature. Schuman describes Kampan’s Iramavataram thus: “perhaps the supreme achievement of Tamil letters, and certainly one of the great works of the world’s religious literature, is Kampan’s version of the Hindu epic, the Ramayana. No creation of Tamil poets has ever been so passionately loved as Kampan’s Iramavataram” (135). This epic is divided into six chapters called Kandam in Tamil.

Bala Kandam (Chapter: Childhood)
Ayodhya Kandam (Chapter: Ayodhya)
Aranya Kandam (Chapter: Forest)
Kishkinta Kandam (Chapter: Kishkintha)
Sundara Kandam (Chapter: Beautiful)
Yutha Kandam (Chapter: War)

The Kandams are further divided into 123 sections called Padalam containing around 12,000 verses. The chapter Sundara Kandam on the difficulties faced by the main characters, their practice of restraint, and their hopes for a better future is the most popular one. Regarding its religious significance, the epic is read by Hindus during prayers and in some households the entire epic is read during the Tamil Month of Aadi.
Kumudendu Ramayana (a Jain version) by Kumudendu and the Ramachandra Charita Purana by Nagachandra during the 13th century, and Kumara-Valmiki Torave’s Ramayana written in the 16th century are three Kannada versions of the Ramayana.

During the 15th century, the Ramayanu written by Krishnadasa Shama in Kardalipura, the Assamese Katha Ramayana or Kotha Ramayana by Madhava Kandali, and the Bengali Krittivasi Ramayan by Krittivasa are notable works. Also in this century a Telugu version called The Sri Ranganatha Ramayana mu was adapted by Ranganatha.

In the 16th century, the Marathi Bhavartha Ramayana was written by Eknath. This narrative epic of forty thousands couplets in ‘ovi’ meter has enjoyed huge popularity among the rural folk. Of forty thousands couplets, twenty-five thousand were written by Eknath; the rest was completed by his disciple Gawba. While composing this work, Eknath was conscious of the poetic values and the relationship of poetry with society. As Singh remarks, “Awareness of the prevailing conditions and also suggestions to meet the distracting political and social onslaught are also distinctive feathers of this work” (433). In Orissa, Dandi Ramayana or Jagamohan Ramayana was adapted by Balaram Dasa in Dandibritta variety of prose rhythm. In this form if the first line consists of twelve letters, the second line can exceed from fourteen to twenty five. Dandi Ramayana is not a literary translation but is an Oriya imitation of Valmiki Ramayana. It was put to music and sung by popular singers and presents Oriya customs and traditions, rites and rituals, feasts and festivalities and the folk tales (Datta 57). During this century the Malayalam Adhyatma Ramayana Kilipattu written by Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan is noted. Ezhuthachan is considered the Father of the Malayalam language. The importance of his version of Ramayana is that it is full of devotion. It is so popular in Kerala that it is used for chanting in all Hindu homes in Kerala. Ramayana Masam (Ramayana Month) is celebrated every year in Kerala between mid-Julys to mid-August. This work comprises six chapters as follows:

1. Bala Kanda
2. Ayodhya Kanda
3. Aranya Kanda
4. Kishkindha Kanda
5. Sundara Kanda
6. Yuddha Kanda
The other significant work of this time is *Ramacharitmanasa* composed by the 16th-century Indian poet Goswami Tulsidas (1532–1623). *Ramacharitmanas* literally means the "lake of the deeds of Rama". The epic is also called *Tulsikrit Ramayan* literally means "The Ramayan composed by Tulsi" or in other words, "The Ramayan of Tulsidas". As Vyas notes, it has been the custom to name the Ramayan after its author (10). The *Ramacharitmanas* consists of seven Kāndas or ‘books’ where the poet compares it to seven steps leading into the holy waters of Mansarovor a Himalayan lake "which purifies the body and the soul at once" (Ghose 118). In his entry on ‘Ramcharitmanas’ Class writes, “The word manas alludes to a sacred lake in the Himalayas, and so the title may be rendered 'the divine lake of Ram's deeds". It also means the “lake of the mind”. Rāmcāritmānas, composed in the Avadhi dialect of Hindi, is an epic of some 13,000 lines. This work is considered one of the greatest works of Hindu literature, and is often referred to as the "Bible of northern India" by Western scholars of Indian literature (Lochtefeld 559). Of the seven books, the first two titled Bāl kānd (Childhood Episode) and Ayodhya kānd (Ayodhya Episode), make up more than half the work. The later books are Aranya Kānd (Forest Episode), Kishkindha Kānd (Kishkindha Episode), Sunder Kānd (Pleasant Episode), Lanka Kānd (Lanka Episode) and Uttar Kānd (Later Episode).

During the 17th century, the Punjabi *Ramavatara* was written by Guru Gobind Singh, the Gujarati *Tulsi-Krita Ramayana* was an adaptation of the Tulisdas *Ramayana* by Premanand Swami, and an Urdu version titled the *Pothi Ramayana* are noted. During the 19th century, *Ramavatara Charita* of Prakash Ram is a Kashmiri version. Since its first edition in Persio-Arabic script, the *Ramayana* of Prakash Ram has run into six editions as proof of the popularity of the poem in Kashmir and has served as a model for the epic poets of the Kashmiri language (Datta 43).

Besides these Indian versions, *Ramayana* in many versions exists in other Asian cultures. In Nepal, two versions of *Ramayana* are present. The first one is a Nepal Bhasa version titled *Siddhi Ramayan* written by Mahakavi Siddhidas Mahaju Amatya during Nepal Bhasa renaissance era. Mahakavi Siddhidas is considered the greatest poet in the language and among the four stalwarts involved in Nepal Bhasa renaissance. The other one is *Bhanubhaktako Ramayan* by Bhanubhakta Acharya in Nepali language, recognized as the first epic written in this language. It is so lyrical that it is more a song than a poem (Bishnu website).
Other renderings of *Ramayana* include a Malaysian version entitled *Hikayat Seri Rama*. Although the main plot remains the same, some aspects are modified to suit the local context such as the spelling and pronunciation of names. Also Laxmana plays a larger role, sometimes becoming more important than his elder brother Rama. Another work is *Kakawin Ramayana* of Java composed in *kakawin* meter. The Javanese *Ramayana* differs markedly from the original Hindu prototype. The first half of this work is similar to the original Sanskrit version, but the second half is diverges completer to the unrecognizable by Indian scholars of the Sanskrit *Ramayana*. One of the main changes is the entry of the all-powerful Javanese indigenous deity *dhayana*, the guardian god of Java Semar and his misshapen sons, *Gareng, Petruk*, and *Bagong*. This latter part of the work is the more popular and is performed in all *wayang* performances. The other adaption of *Ramayana* in Indonesia is *Ramakavaca* of Bali. *Phra Lak Phra Lam* of Laos, *Maharadya Lawana* and *Darangen of Mindanao* (Philippines), *Yama Zatdaw* of Burma (Myanmar), *Reamker* of Cambodia and *Ramakien* of Thailand are other renderings of *Ramayana* outside India. The Chinese Ming period (1368-1644), the novel *Hsi-yu Chi* or *Journey to the West* has also adopted some aspects of *Ramayana*. The story deals with the journey of monk Hsuan-tsang during a pilgrimage to India to obtain Buddhist scriptures. In this journey four animal disciples accompany him, especially his superhuman monkey disciple Sun Wu-k'ung. In this novel, the character of Sun Wukong could have been based on Hanuman. Subbaraman in his essay “Beyond the Question of the Monkey Imposter: Indian Influence on the Chinese Novel, The Journey to the West” studies the parallels between *The Journey to the West* and the *Ramayana* and states,

...comparisons between the two texts should not simply be limited to the two monkey characters, but should be expanded to other characters, settings, extended plot lines, and even thematic organization. The use of these examples will hopefully illuminate the many ways Indian literature may have influenced the Chinese novel *The Journey to the West* without portraying the novel as a foreign (website).

Besides such classic versions of the epic, some Contemporary prose renderings of *Ramayana* have been published. *Sri Ramayana Darshanam* by K. V. Puttappa in Kannada, *Ramayana Kalpavrikshamu* by Viswanatha Satyanarayana in Telugu, and *Geet Ramayan* in Marathi by
G.D. Madgulkar are three noteworthy examples. In addition, R. K. Narayan wrote a shortened prose work. Ashok Banker also has written a series of six novels both based on the Ramayana.

**Translation of Ramayana into Persian**

Traditionally, there is a close cultural relationship between India and Persia which goes back to ancient times. In Sanskrit literature, especially in Vishnu Puran, Persians are mentioned in many cases as Parasika. Also the inscriptions of Persepolis and Naqsh-e-Rustam of Emperor Darius (d. 486 B.C.) located in the south of Iran point to Indus as ‘Hindush’ from which the term ‘Hindu’ was derived and later used by Arab geographers and historians. There seems to be a striking similarity between Vedic gods and the ancient Iranian and Hittite deities. The cult of sun-worship was brought to India by the Magas who migrated from Sakadvip or Persia around the first century B.C. Initially they were not admitted into Hindu rituals and ceremonies but in the course of time they were absorbed into Vedic society and came to be known as Sakadvip or Maga Brahmans (Momin website).

Close interaction and exchange between Persia and India is reflected in arts and crafts, architecture, etiquette and manners, music, as well as literary compositions and translations. To mention an outstanding example, the Indian fable masterpiece, *Panchatantra* was first translated into a foreign language during the Sassanid reign of Khosru Anushiravan around 570 CE when his famous physician Borzuye translated it from Sanskrit into Pahlavi, the Middle Persian language, entitled *Kalile va Demne* (Zarrinkoub 374-79).

During the medieval period, Persian language enjoyed a pre-eminent position of cultural and political spheres in India which consequently influenced to a greater or lesser degree a large number of Indian languages. The deep impact of Persian on Indian regional languages led some scholars to claim that “no other language, apart from Sanskrit which is the mother of all modern Indo-European languages in the country, has left such a deep and enduring influence on Indian languages as Persian” (Momin website).

Persian literary traditions also influenced Indian literature and led to the flourishing of Persian literature in India. Many Sanskrit works were translated into Persian under the patronage of Muslim emperors and kings. If we leave out the re-telling of the stories of the Ramayana and
the *Mahabharata* in Indian regional languages, the first significant translations took place at the time of Emperor Akbar (Asaduddin website).

Akbar in his efforts to cultivate understanding among religions and to reduce sectarian tensions between Hindus and Muslims, commissioned translations of Sanskrit, Arabic and Turkish works into Persian and set up a ‘Maktab Khaneh’ or translation bureau. The Sanskrit texts which were rendered into Persian included *Atharbed* by Badaoni; *Bhagwad Gita* by Faizi; *Gangadhar* by Abul Fazl; *Haribans* by Maulana Sheri; *Jog-Bashishta* by Maulana Faraniuli; *Katha Sarit Sagara* by Badaoni; *Kishen Joshi* by Abul Fazl; *Lilavati* and *Nal Daman* by Faizi; *Mahesh Mohanand* by Abul Fazl; *Singhasana Battisi* by Badaoni, as “Nama-i-Khird Afza”; *Tajak* on astronomy by Muhammad Khan; a treatise on elephants by Mulla Sheri; *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* by Badayuni and others.

Mullah Abdul Qadir Badayuni, of Akbar’s court reluctantly translated *Ramayana* into Persian. This rendering began in 1585 and was completed around the 1589. Badayuni translated it under royal pressure and wrote:

In the month of the year nine hundred and ninety seven (997), I finished the translation of the *Ramayana*, which has taken me four years. I wrote it all in complete and brought it to the Emperor. When I wrote at the end of it the couplet

“We have written a story, who will bring it to the emperor? We have burnt our soul, who will bring it to the beloved?”

It was much admired. He commanded me to write a preface to it after the manner of the authors. But, it was no such great recovery from my falling out of favour, and a *kutbah* would have to be written without praising the God and the Prophet, I dissimulated. And from that black book, which is nothing like the book of my life, I flee to God for refuge. The transcription of *Kufr* (infidelity) is not *kufr* and I repeat the declaration of faith in opposition to heresy, why should I fear (which God forbid!) that a book which was all written against the grain, and in accordance with a strict command, shall bring with it a curse” (Gandhi website).

Shortly after the translation of *Ramayana*, the other important Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* was also rendered into Persian as ‘*Razm Nameh*’ or the “Book of War”. However, following
Badayuni’s rendering of *Ramayana*, other writers began to translate or compose it into Persian. The number of complete or partial translations of the *Ramayana* in Persian is not known but over a period of three centuries (16th to 19th) *Ramayana* found many versions in Persian. The former curator of Persian and Arabic manuscripts at the Natural Museum in Delhi estimated that the number of *Ramayana* composed in Persian was thirty eight but some scholars set around ninety (Momin website).

One of these Persian translations was done by Sheikh Sadullah Masih Panipati, being the reign of Emperor Jahangir. This text *Ramayan-e-Masihi* was published in 1899 by Munshi Naval Kishor Press, Lucknow. It remained neglected during Jahangir’s reign because Muslim readers had lost their interest in Hindu scriptures. Fanatic Muslims blamed him for composing the *Ramayana*. Therefore to justify himself, Masih condemned fanatics in the beginning of his work under the heading *Dar Mazammat-e-Hossad* (condemning the jealous). He reminded the two *naats* in praise of the Prophet Mohammad written at the start of the epic, and in ‘Peighambar Nameh’ his other epic poem relating the life and exploits of the Prophet. But there were ignored by cynic and fanatics. Masih wrote in Persian ‘masnavi’ style and gave separate headings to all incidents or episodes. Masnavi is a series of couplets in rhymed pairs (aa, bb, cc, and so on) as a type of Persian verse used chiefly for heroic, historical, and romantic epic poetry and didactic poetry. Thus he employed an Indic theme within the literary conventions of the Persian Masnavi.

Although Masih composed his work based on Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, he transformed the story as a Persian romance between two lovers. Ram and Sita. His work also reflects a mystical-allegorical dimension while referring to Rama as ‘body’ and Sita as the ‘soul’. The attempt of Rama in searching of his beloved Sita frequently work as allegory of mystical love of a soul seeking unity with the divine. Saini in his essay “Ramayana retold in Persian” points to this fact and says:

He [Masih] deals with it as a love poem and not as scripture. Sita is painted like a beautiful maiden. It was her beauty that attracted Rama to marry her. Ravana also carried her away when his sister Sarunakha described her matchless beauty before that demon. He took Sita to Lanka to marry her and not to avenge the insult heaped on his sister, whose nose was chopped by Laxmana in presence of Rama. The Hindu poets do not describe Sita’s beauty from top to toe. It seems that Masih could not read the Sanskrit
epic of Valmiki and composed his magnum opus after reading Badayuni or hearing its bare outlines from his Hindu friends. Still this book is a piece of superb poetry (website).

Another translation of *Ramayana* into Persian was done by S. Mohar Singh entitled *Balmiki Ramayan*. It was published in 1890 by Ganesh Prakash Press, Lahore. Mohar Singh belonged to Ram Nagar village in Gujranwala district (now in Pakistan). He was employed in Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s army. Unfortunately Mohar Singh died before who could complete his work. The remaining portion of his work was completed by his friend Hiranand Lal using the same meter and style. Mohar Singh’s rendering drew on Valmiki’s *Ramayana* and he often mentions the name of the sage gratefully. He did not divide his work to traditional cantos but looking to *masnavi’s* form described all events by various headings. The style of the work is simple but sometimes Sanskrit words occurred. Saini believes that “these two poets have not only enriched the epic tradition related to Rama but have also paved the way for communal amity. One has painted Rama as a human being with divine qualities and other has depicted him as a divine being with human characteristics” (website).

The figure of Rama was portrayed in Persian literature also through the translations of the Vedantic text, the *Yoga Vasistha*. This work is one of the Rama stories which was rendered into Persian during the Mughal Dynasty. *Yoga Vasistha* also known as Vasishtha Ramayana is a Hindu spiritual text and is considered one of the most important scriptures of the Vedantic philosophy. This book was originally written in Sanskrit and traditionally attributed to Valmiki while modern scholars estimate its composition as being between the 11th and 14th centuries AD.

In this work, prince Rama returning from his journey around the country becomes disillusioned with the world after experiencing *vairagya* (dispassion). King Dasaratha expresses his concern to Sage Vasistha who consoles the king that Rama's dispassion (*vairagya*) was a sign that the prince was now ready for spiritual enlightenment. He says that Rama has begun to understand profound spiritual truths, which was the cause of his confusion and he just needed confirmation. Sage Vasistha asks king Dasaratha to summon Rama. Then, in the court of king Dasaratha, the sage begins the discourse for Rama which lasts for several days. The answers to Rama's questions form the entire scripture that is *Yoga Vasistha* in which Rushi Vasistha presents his philosophical concepts on salvation.
One of the significant translations of *Yoga Vasistha* was carried out by Nizam al-Din Panipati in the late 16th century A.D. The translation also known as the *Jug-Basisht*, became popular among Persian intellectuals with Indo-Persian interests (Leslie104). Later, Jahangir’s grandson prince Dara Shikoh commissioned a translation of the *Yoga Vasishta*. In this work, Rama is presented as a disciple rather than a semi-divine king. The story begins with Dara dreaming of Rama and Vasishta and Vasishta asking Rama to feed Dara. Rama embraces Dara and feeds him sweets which seem to portray a Sufi understanding. Different from Rama of Akbar’s translations, the attempt made to combine ruler-ship with spiritual realization and powers.

Although poorly catalogued, the libraries’ manuscripts of Persian Rama stories give evidence of the Rama theme in Persian literature. In Jehangir’s time Girdhardas, who was a contemporary of Tulsi das, translated much of Valmiki’s epic into Persian verse. In Shahjahan’s time another rendering of the epic was written entitled Ramayan Faizi. In Aurangzeb’s time Chandrabhan Bedil translated Valmiki into Persian verse and prose in 1696 entitled Nargestan. This translation was published in 1875 in Lucknow.

Later in 1860, a translation was done by Amanat Ray Lalpuri in forty thousand couplets and arranged into six chapters with. He added a ghazal to each chapter. In the next decade, Meser Ram Das Ghabel translated four chapters of the *Ramayana* into Persian. He titled first chapter as *Mobarak* (blest), the second as *Feragh* (seclusion), the third as *Jang* (battle) and the forth chapter as *Jolus* (crown). This translation is in verse. Another translation was by Sumer Chand which was illustrated during the reign of Farrukh Siyar (1715-16 A.D.) as 258 miniatures throwing light on the art, architecture, costumes and ornaments of the period besides highlighting the composite culture of India in the late medieval period (Kuma 11).

Munshi Chagann (1866-1899) also known by his pen name Hasan wrote a prose narrative as *Neirang-e Hasan* (Trap’s of Hasan) or *Bahar-e Ayodhya* (Spring of Ayodhya) in 1877. He also wrote a shortened version of the epic included in his book (Abaee 15).
Ramayana and its Impact on Art and Culture

Kathleen M. Erndl, a western Indologist maintains that “The Ramayana story, more than any other sacred story in India, has been interpreted as a blueprint for right human action”. She asserts that “although the Ramayana is a myth that can be approached on many levels, it is the human level that has had the most profound effect on the Indian people” (67). Thus the importance of Ramayana is not limited to its literary features. It functions as a fundamental text of Hinduism as one of the sacred books illustrating Hindu ethics. Hindus learn the epic as a holy book from their childhood believing that reading or hearing of it blesses both the reader and listener. In this regard U. Thein Han states, “It (the Ramayana) is not only a literary treasure but also a source of ennobling influence on the relationships of men as parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, teachers and pupils, and rulers and the ruled” (Iyengar xiii). Pointing to its significance in the daily life of the Indians, there are two all-Indian holidays to celebrate the events of Ramayana: one is Dussehra, a nine-day festival in October commemorating Rama's victory over Ravana; and the second is Divali, the festival of Lights in October-November, commemorating Rama and Sita’s return to their kingdom Ayodhya. On the Ramayana’s wholly salutary impact on the people of India, Fr. C. Bulcke writes:

The popularity of the Valmiki Ramayana and the voluminous Rama-Literature of many centuries is a monument to the idealism of India, its high esteem of moral values and its belief in the ultimate of good over evil. In the same way, the enthusiastic response of the millions of northern India to the message of Ramcharitamanasa testifies to the deep-seated religious belief and spontaneous piety of the soul of India (Iyengar 2).

The Ramayana as an impressive monument of poetry has been reflected in other arts. The story is reflected in songs, theatre, painting, temple architecture and dance as well as in cinema and television. The 1975 Hindi television serial based on the Ramayana story captivated its audiences. Philip Lutgendorf wrote about this serial:

The Ramayana serial had become the most popular programme ever shown on Indian television- and something more: an event, a phenomenon of such proportions that intellectuals and policy makers struggled to come to terms with its significance and long
range import. Never before had such a large percentage of south Asia’s population been united in a single activity; never before had a single message instantaneously reached so enormous a regional audience” (128).

The profound impact of Ramayana can be seen in the Mappila Songs of the Muslims of Kerala and Lakshadweep as well as in the American song and later film Sita Sings the Blues and. Ramayana is represented in the Indian performative traditions of Yakshagana. The epic is painted on the walls of Thailand's Wat Phra Kaew palace temple. Despite Islam forbidden theater and dance, performing arts based on Ramayana and Mahabharata have survived in Malaysia and Indonesia. In Indonesia, the world’s largest Islamic nation, Ramayana and Mahabharata are compulsory subjects in most the universities. Indonesians take pride in saying “Islam is our Religion but Ramayana is our Culture” (Kumar 4). In Indonesia, the tales from the epic are performed in ballet performances, masked danced drama, and Wayang shadow puppetry.

At the 1975 Ramayana seminar that was held in New Delhi, Amin Sweeney gave a masterly account of ‘The Malaysian Ramayana in Performance’. He states:

The characters of the Lord Rama, his lady Sita, and their loyal followers still come to life nightly on the shadow screens of the north-west Malaysia where the performance of a good dalang can still draw a larger audience than a local open-air cinema showing the latest in Hollywood coco-cola culture (Iyengar xiii).

The television series ‘Ramayan’ by producer Ramanand Sagar and ‘Jai Hanuman’ by Sanjay Khan are two adoption of Ramayana on the screen. A Japanese animated film ‘Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama’ (1990) and an Indian animated film ‘Ramayana: The Epic’ (2010) are two more examples. The Southeast Asian Games in 1997 used Sri Hanuman as its mascot. He is a popular figure or deity in all these countries. Kumar writes of the character of Hanuman:

Hanuman or Hanumat or Aanjaneya or Anjata or Maruti is known by different names in these countries: Hanoman in Balinese, Anoman and Senggana in Javanese, Haliman in Karbi, Anjat or Anujit in Khmer, Hanmone(e), Hulahman, Hunahman, Huonahman, Huorahman in Lao, Haduman, Hanuman Kera Putih, Kera Kechil Imam Tergangga, Pahlawan Udara, Shah Numan in Malay, Laxamana (yes, and Laxmanis
known as Mangawarna) in Maranao, Hanumant in Sinhalese, Anuman in Tamil, Anchat or Wanon in Thai and Hanumandha or Hanumanta in Tibetan (4).

These distinctive features have given *Ramayana* a unique status and has caused its numerous permutations as Narayana Rao maintains, “the *Ramayana* in India is not just a story with variety of retellings; it is a language with which a host of statements may be made” (114).
Work Cited


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