



PROLOGUE

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The seven sages united in their holy chants and in their lustre, divinely elected and God like, with their deep insight took up the reins like one seated on the chariot (RV X. 130.7). The Vedic seers became the leaders of the society. They are held to be makers of not only verses but of cultures and civilizations. They have been called as '*bhutaḥṛti*' the world builders, the self-chosen representatives of humanity.

Those were the days of *Ṛta*, and *Tapas*, sacrifices and rituals, the *ṛṣis* and *rājas*. Those were the days of Vedic exclusiveness.

The epics form a land mark in the growth of ancient literature, a turning point. The literature could be so stimulating, refreshing and fascinating, that it can enrapture the life with ecstasy and bliss is established by the epics. It was the rule of bliss, not intelligence or knowledge. Bharata explained the cause of bliss "nothing proceeds without *rasa*". The epics have a pleasing narrative style, a simple metre *anustup* and lyrical variations having *rasa* as the soul. For all these reasons, Rāmāyaṇa is hailed as the *adikāvya*. The epics are most pleasing to listen *srāvyānām uttama cedam*. Adikāvi, the primordial poet has unveiled the ambrosial path of poetry. Literature has crossed the high lands of Vedic unintelligibility and exclusiveness and flowed like a graceful spring satisfying the heart of every *sahṛdaya* with Joy and beauty.

Rasa, bliss and beauty, these traits were carried forward into another plane of poetic style, called as 'drama' touching and encompassing in its fold the vast humanity. '*Nāṭyam bhinnarucer Janasya bahudhā pyeṣkam samārādhānam*' Drama is an entertainment common to people of different tastes says the great poet Kālidāsa.

Dramas are pure expressions of joy ebbing beauty and bliss. *ānanda niṣyandiṣu rūpakeṣu*. Because dramas imitate and celebrate human life and nature. *Lokavṛtyānukaraṇam*, Drama presents, proclaims and promotes human emotions

bhāvānukirtanam. Drama is the repose of repressive human heart, *Visrāntijanakam*, it is charming and pleasurable *lalitātmaka*. It educates instructs and influences people in a pleasant manner Nāṭya is not only meant for enjoyment, but also it moulds the characters of human being. So nāṭya is rooted in human emotions, *bhāvas*, sprouted from human conditions and imitated human sorrows and happiness. Nāṭya is *āsvādarupa*, can be relished by the *Sahṛdayas* or spectators. The spectators include all the *varnas* because nāṭya is *sārva-varṇikam*. Bharata the father of Indian aesthetics has started the earliest ever revolution of human race through his work on Dramatargy by saying that -

na veda vyavahāroayam saṃsrāvyah śudrajātisu /

tasmāt sṛjām param vedam pañcamam sārva varṇikam //

“The *sudras* do not have access to Vedas that is why I have created this fifth veda in which all of them will have access.” Literature has landed on the vast fertile plane of general mass, touching each one with freshness and enjoyment, beauty and bliss.

The epics and ancient Indian plays have a perfect union of *maṇi* and *kāncana* as both these genres are originated for the people with the outstanding features of easy narration and expression of emotion. The poets and dramatists have borrowed from Rāmāyaṇa remodelling them with their individual poetic talent. The most important aspect of drama is the humanising tendency turning literature towards life, by that democratising it.

When the theme is Rāmakathā, the poet is Vālmiki, and the two singing boys Lava and Kuśa have the sweet-voices like *kinnaras*, what is then lacking to captivate the heart of the *Sahṛdayas*, says Kālidāsa the great Indian poet.

Rāmakathā, springs out of an emotional exuberance, deep, intimate and infinite. From a sudden gush of compassion *karuṇa*, out bursts the glorious fountain of human emotion and bliss, the great tale of Rāma. Rāmāyaṇa has spread out petal by petal by the poets of posterity acknowledging Vālmiki as the sweetest poet of India. *madhumaya bhaṇitinām mārgadarsi maharṣi*.

Rāmāyaṇa remains as the inexhaustible source of inspiration with immense resources of love, light, joy, beauty, glory and variety till now. It has the supreme potency of being the fountain spring of the Indian classical literature folklore, Art and Architecture, ephigraphy, iconography and performing arts. Rāmāyaṇa mingles with the blood-streams of Indian life and responds to they heart-beats of Indians.

In this epic, the story does not end. In a true sense, the end is it's true beginning. It is the ultimate romantic mode, the perception of love and passion in their dazzling brilliance and beauty. Here love is in it's most vivid state and it is the mode of self-discovery. In Rāmāyaṇa sympathy and sadness, affection and pity, compassion and sorrow, all are one, like two sides of a coin, and it takes the sahr̥daya into a subtle state of sublimity to see that unity of emotion into one. This ineffable vision is called *divyadr̥ṣṭi*, the vision of a connoisseur.

The universal appeal of Rāmāyaṇa pervades through the whole humanity in multiple forms, in diversified genre. In the process of transmission, the central theme of the epic has remained same, the grandeur of love and passion dazzle against the back-drop of destiny. Rāma's loneliness becomes the loneliness of the whole humanity, his tragedy the tragedy of human race. No work of world literature has ever produced so profound influence on the life and thought of people as the Rāmāyaṇa. The great literature has transcended the regional and national boundaries and transmitted to every place in Asia where ever Indian thought has travelled. The '*ayana*', the paths of Rāma, has spread out in the entire globe touching the heart of whole humanity. Rāmāyaṇa does not belong to any one moment in history or to any nation, on any human being. The life of Rāma has become the lyric of Asian continent. The story of Rāma has captivated the minds of millions over many centuries and many generations.

The question comes to mind what is that in Rāmāyaṇa that touches the spirit, what is the essence that makes Rāmāyaṇa the spirit of Indian culture. In India as in any other country, certain fundamental ideals proclaim national ideals and if the nation is to be understood, these ideals shloud be known.

Rāmāyaṇa reflects the *summum bonum* of Indian culture and ethics. It is the expression and sublimation of life both terrestrial and spiritual. It is a great synthesis of Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. Rāmāyaṇa blossoms in the garden of Dharma, Artha and Kāma spreading the beautiful fragrance of Mokṣa. Rāma and Sitā, both of them are treated as the epitome of Indian conjugal love. If we compare the homeric hymns, the Iliad and Odyssey with Rāmāyaṇa, the Indian excellences, ideals, ambitions, dreams and spirit are wonderfully revealed. Helen, the daughter of Zeus and Leda, one of the most plausible example of faded goddess, who has been consequently made into a mortal woman, her abduction by Theseus, her wedding to Menelaus, her flight with Paris, the wedding to Paris at Troy, her stay with Paris as his wife and finally her recovery by Menelaus, all reflect the Greek tradition and cultural expression, the power and animal strength. But, in Rāmāyaṇa Sitā exemplifies the pure, beautiful, effulgent characteristics of Indian womanhood. The traits like auspiciousness, chastity, devotion to her husband nurture and nature Sitā's character. Her idealized faithfulness to her husband during the stay at Rāvaṇa's court immortalises her character. Rāvaṇa has offered all his wealth, his life, his everything to Sitā, He tried to attract her love and break her utter loyalty to her husband Rāma by all possible and impossible means. Sitā remains unaltered and pure. Constancy and consistency in love are the twin traits which have been stressed much. For Sitā and Rāma these two virtues are essence of their sacred love. Kālidāsa tenderly puts it in a verse where he explains, even Sitā has been banished from the kingdom by Rāma, to perform his duty towards his subjects, but she is the lady, his another soul, whom he adored in his heart of hearts from where she could never be banished. The culminating moment comes when she has to give *agnipariṣkhyā* to prove her purity from which she comes out triumphantly. Again she has to face a critical moment when she has to prove her husband's magnanimity as a king. She gives her full support to her husband at this trial of king's loyalty to his subjects accepting exile in the forest. The path of Rāma shows the world, how difficult to traverse it. The striking condensation of cultural and ethical distinctiveness of India is effulgently revealed in this great epic of Vālmiki that makes it exemplified before the world.

Around this nucleus of Rāmakathā a vast world of literature has been created by the latter poets of India. They have created many versions of Rāmāyaṇa having their innovations, retaining the vital link with the Vālmikian spiritual power-house.

Among all these creations the continuous signs of evolution are found. The situations and characters are changed according to the requirement of the genre while it is a kāvya the poetic embellishments are well-depicted. While it is a play the dramatic techniques are added with the poetic gracefulness. In large number of plays based on Rāmāyaṇa, Śṛṅgāra has predominated as śṛṅgāra has the special quality of giving utmost pleasure to the spectator holding him back for a longer period. Rāma's majestic and lofty heroism also remains part of these plays, but integrated with the *aṅgi rasa śṛṅgāra*.

So the soul, the spirit of Rāmakathā remains śṛṅgāra, from the cry of the 'krauñci' till the shattering of ground, as it is for Sitā to enter into it. Though it appears as *karuṇa* but the vital force behind this emotion is *śṛṅgāra*. The separation that appears so large in the epic story thus metaphorically and metaphysically is the inter-locking of two souls creating a unity together, they are Rāma and Sitā. The unity is based on flux, resistant to stable definitions of love.

If a flower never withered, if the colours of rainbow never disappeared, if a lover or beloved never separated would we love a flower, a rainbow or union in love, so dearly, so passionately ?

In love, separation is no less necessary than union. It is the testing stone, *nikaṣa pāsāṇa* of śṛṅgāra. Love gets its radiance and sweetness being burnt by the blazings of separation.

Sri Rāma is eternal his virtues are infinite, so are the dimensions of his story. The interpretation of the plays based on Rāmakathā from the erotic point of view unfolds its diversified and enigmatic presence in almost all the plays opening up the dimensions of human emotions celebration of explicit emotional aspects. The process of evolution of Rāmakathā through ages, the transformations of Rāmakathā through ages, the transformations that have taken place from Vālmiki till today

becomes effulgently evident in these plays. The gradual growth, the evolution of Rāma's character assimilated from social, cultural regional and poetic point of view are articulated in these dramatic creations. Between the emotion from which a poem or play rises and the reader or spectator, there is always a cultural layer of density from which the images and characters are created and represented. So the emotion or *rasa* gains resonance from the atmosphere.

The love story of Rāma and Sitā is a subject which has been treated by the greatest wits of our nation. From Bhāsa, Bhavabhuti, Murāri, Jayadeva, up to Tulasidasa. Many gem of creations are also remained in the form of manuscripts, some are published but remains unnoticed by the Sahridayas one among them is poet Hastimalla's Maithili Kalyāṇam that belongs to last part of 12th century. In this play the poet Hastimalla aims to exalt the characters from the dimension of Śṛṅgāra. So the poet focuses on the early phase of Rāma's life, his adolescence, pre-marital period and the newly married life.

Rāma is worshipped as an embodiment of righteous action and social propriety, hence revered as *Maryādā Puruṣottama*. Gradually Rāma's story has turned in a dominant cult sometimes in India. This cult's mythology and theology have crossed the boundaries of *maryādā*, and invaded the sphere of *lilā* Rāma may be an example of social docorum, but as the prince of Ayodhyā he is the enjoyer of the earth's delights and bliss. He is *saṃyamī*, self-controlled, has taken a vow of one wife *eka patnivarta* but a house holder he is supposed to savour the joys of love or *Kāma*. So Rāma's character has evolved and remodelled accordingly 'lilā' has been added to his character. Playfulness has added a new charm and exaltation to his personality. The Vaiṣṇavas see their Lord as an archetypal actor, repeatedly assuming roles in his 'lilā'.

The pleasures of the early phase of Rāma's life has received unending attention of the dramatists of the classical time. Mādhurya is predominantly manifested through these plays based on Rāma's youthful age. The poets like Hastimall must have initiated to this tradition of evolution of *maryādā puruṣottama* into *lilā puruṣottama*.

Maithilikalyāṇam of Hastimalla is pre-eminently a play of sentiment of Śṛṅgāra. It is a triumph of dramatic lyricism based on sublime love story of Rāma and Sitā. Their meeting at the pleasure garden of Mithilā, the *purvānurāga*, *māna*, *pranaya*, the *svayamvara*, all these are depicted with high emotional exuberance and lyrical flavour.

The work of a literary artist is judged and analysed from various angles and aspects. We may study it biographically seeing it formed by and reflecting the events of his own life or historically seeing it influenced and reflecting the events and thoughts of his age or by trying to trace the development of his thought, vision, and philosophy of life. There is another line of approach that we can study his craftsmanship, and by watching his imagination at work on his materials. In the following chapter an attempt is made to analyse the play *Maithilikalyāṇam* from the angles of dramaturgy and poet's skill and craftsmanship in depicting *śṛṅgāra*.

In the 6th-7th chapters of this thesis, an attempt is made to analyse the play *Maithilikalyāṇam* from the angles of dramaturgy, and poet's craftsmanship in depicting the sentiment *śṛṅgāra*.

The Original source of this research work is Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa and the Sanskrit plays based on Rāmakathā such as Pratimānāṭaka, Uttararāmacharita, Kundamālā, Anrgharāghava, Prasannarāghava etc. Except that the secondary sources are the work of Kamil Bulke and V. Raghavan on Rāmāyaṇa then one work in Hindi on Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa such as Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa evaṃ saṃskṛta nāṭakonme Rāma also helped a lot. The other book by Yuthika Ghosh titled as Epic Sources of Sanskrit Literature also treated as a base book.

