ABSTRACT

*The Ramayana* has wielded a perpetual and pervasive influence on the Indian mind with its timeless appeal. Though dating back to antiquity, the epic is still a living force in the life of Indian people, and has become incorporated in the texture of people’s life. The story of *The Ramayana* has both intrigued and fascinated the elite intellectuals as well as the simple unread and untaught villagers. The epic has given them all a common social background of heroic tradition and ethical living. Millions of Indians even today cherish in their minds the stories of their ancient epics. *The Ramayana* symbolizes the Indian ethos and the Indian cultural history is identified with this epic. *The Ramayana* tradition has become a living element in the lives of Indians, as it has the potential and rich content capable of pulling their everyday existence to higher realms of enlightenment and right living. The epic presents an idealistic view of Indian life.

Defying the process of aging, over the centuries, *The Ramayana* has not only remained fresh but also has influenced and enriched the literary tradition of India. Writers through their works have expressed how they have perceived and interpreted the rich narrative in the light of their own times in history, their place in society, literary inclinations, religious beliefs and commitments along with political and social views. The diversity in the interpretations of the epic, its adaptations and different renditions reflect the perspectives of the period of their composition.
Indian English writers have re-visited and re-shaped the epic-theme and its characters. The reflections of The Ramayana in Indian English literature are varied and multidimensional. While in some works, the theme is adopted and presented with different angles, in some other works the framework comes from the story of The Ramayana. The well known Indian English writers like Raja Rao, R K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand have made use of structural and digressional use of the myths. Many characters in The Ramayana have become archetypes and myths. These myths, images and archetypes are reflected in Indian literature including Indian English literature. Their works thus reveal the mythic frame and mythic reality of the Indian society.

The purpose of this study is to bring out different reflections of The Ramayana in Indian English literature and to study how the themes and characters of the epic are reconstructed, interpreted and evolved in different human contexts. The study aims at finding out the different psycho-social reflections and to explore how the writers have employed the archetypes and myths as symbols of various aspects of life and human nature in contemporary context, making the theme of ancient epic, relevant to the contemporary human existence.

The study comprises Indian English Poetry, Fiction and Drama. It shows how the situations and characters are interpreted in the light of the writers’ own thinking and creative insights. The study brings out various perspectives of the writers on the Ramayana.
The findings and the observations are as follows:

Acceptance, adoption, variation and rejection of the myths of the Ramayana are found in different works. For example, Raja Rao glorifies the myth, taking the recurrent motif of the battle between gods and demons, good and evil, from the myth and making it relevant to the contemporaneity. Mulk Raj Anand reinterprets the myth in the modern context. He asserts his concept of “New Myth” through the protagonist’s enlightened reaction to tradition and custom, corrupted through man’s selfishness and ignorance, as seen in the novel Gauri.

We find the new versions of the old archetypes like Sita and marginalized and stigmatized characters such as Shurpanakha, Ahalya Kaikeyi, and Shambuka in the Indian English writings. Most of them come in focus in the south Indian writings which are studied here in English translations.

There has been a significant variation in the continuity of the archetype Sita in various works. The Sita archetype has acquired various connotations in Indian English Poetry. She occupies most of the space in Indian English Poetry and Fiction.

The study is organized in six chapters: Chapter one: Introduction explains the theme of the research in brief, the objectives of the study, its significance and rationale. The scope and limitations of the study are
mentioned. The methodology and classification of the study into six chapters are explained.

Chapter two: **The Concept and Theory of Reflection in Literature** puts forth the theories of Influence, Reception and Reflection and justifies the title chosen for the thesis. The chapter also defines myths and archetypes in literature.

Chapter three **The Ramayana and its Influence on Indian Culture and Thought** discusses the deep impact of the *The Ramayana* on Indian Thought and Culture and on Indian literature in general. The chapter mentions different Indian versions of *The Ramayana*. The gist of the epic sums up the contents of seven ‘Kandas’ or of parts *Valmiki Ramayana*. Different Indian versions of *The Ramayana* are mentioned in the chapter.

Chapter Four: **The Reflections Of The Ramayana in Indian English Poetry** focuses on the prominent reflections of *The Ramayana* in Indian English Poetry. The poems of Toru Dutt, K R S Iyengar, Kumaran Asan, Meena Alexander and others are critically analyzed.

Chapter Five focuses on the prominent **Reflections of The Ramayana in Indian English Fiction and Drama** and critically analyzes the works of fiction writers like Raja Rao, R K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai and others. The chapter also focuses on creative interpretations of innovative Indian English writers.
Chapter six: **Conclusion** is a conclusive summing up of the study, the findings and observations.