



## THE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF RAMAYANA

**Rini Dwivedi**

Shri Shivaji Science College, Congress Nagar, Nagpur.  
drrini.dwivedi@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT:

Indian literature is the crowning glory of the Indian civilization. It has tremendous works to offer. Our ancient Indian literature was a theistic one .It encompassed the “Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aryankas, the Upanishads, the Epics – Ramyana and Mahabharata, the Brahmashastras, the mythological writings known as Puranas”<sup>1</sup>.The docus of this project is on the great epic namely Ramayana. What is an epic? It may be defined as “noting or pertaining to a long poetic composition, usually centered upon a hero, in which a series of great achievements or events is narrated in elevated style”

### INTRODUCTION:

In this sense, Ramyana is indeed an epic. Centered on the life and time of Lord Ram, considered to be an ideal man, it enumerates his achievements in the various spheres of life. Ramayana is didactic in nature, demonstrating an ensuing battle between good and evil which finally shows the triumph of good over evil. It also lays down themes which exemplifies ethical behavior among various human relationships. It cultivates a utopian state of affairs.

Valmiki’s Ramayana is a narrative poem with roughly 25,000 verses in rich Sanskrit couplets and is divided into seven large books or kandas. Originally it was a oral work, handed down to the subsequent generations orally before it written down, copied and reworked on throughout centuries, covering almost all the regions and scripts of India. Not only was it restricted to India but influenced other regions also e.g. Thailand.

This diversity is illustrated and studied by A. K. Ramanujan in his essay, ‘Three hundred Ramayanas: five examples and three thoughts on translation.’ The purpose of writing this paper is to critically review the essay mentioned above. It is to study the various themes and literary tools brought out in the essay and to study the influence of local culture on the five examples put forth in the essay.

<http://www.webindia123.com/india/literature/literature.htm>

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/epic>,

Romola hapar, Cultural Pasts :Essayism Early Indian Society, Oxford University Press, New Delhi , 2000, Pg.647

Sushil Mittal & Gene Thursby, the Hindu World, p.g.76 [Routledge, New York, 2005]

On 9<sup>th</sup> October 2011, Delhi University’s Academic council decided to drop A. K. Ramanujan’s essay 300 Ramayana’s from Delhi University BS syllabus due to pressure from right wing organizations despite



recommendation to the contrary by the expert committee. This essay has been the subject of controversy since 2008. Slogans like “Historical epic, culture and religion par attack nahinsahenge” rent the air on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2011. It was the prime headline in the Sunday Guardian a national newspaper. ABVP and National Democratic Teacher’s forum– (NDTF) took the cudgels against the essay and its writer. Ramanujan’s description of Ramayana is in total contrast with valmiki’s Ramayana ,which holds a sacred place in heart of every hindu. In fact Ramanujan’s interpretation is just a reflection of vivid religious beliefs ,ethnic values and preferences, social economic, and geographical condition predominant in other states of India and in different religions. In South Indian folk account of the Ramayana is that Ravana becomes pregnant with sita and gives birth to her when he sneezes. In Kannada, Sita means ‘he sneezed’. In Press, Dr. Avnijesh Awasthy – NDTF President and Professor of Hindi at PGDAV College, argued the scientific authenticity of sneezing. Ramayana by Ramanujan does not represent historical or quasi historical interpretations but it has certain historical consciousness about socio-political and economic conditions of that time which reflects in the story, although the events in itself can’t be authentically historical. In fact translating from one language to other is not the literal translation but the interpretation of the translator manifested in various reflections,

for instance, Valmiki portrays Ravana as a demonic character and authors in Jain and Thai version and many other authors had interpreted his character in such manner that he garners sympathy from the society.

### **RAMAYANA – HISTORICAL OR QUASI – HISTORICAL?**

Can Ramayana be regarded as History or is it Quasi-Historical? R.G. Collingwood puts forth the argument that true history should be humanistic. Its object must be to analyze the actions of human beings in the past. “It must be for man’s knowledge of man and not man’s knowledge of god.” Also, as we see, causes for many events in Ramayana are supernatural and not humanistic. Hence in these contexts, Ramayana in itself can be regarded as Quasi-history, as though it “resembles history by making statements about the past,” it is basically theocratic history.

Then what is the historical approach to Ramayana? “The epic is seen as the expression of a certain kind of historical consciousness, even though the events which it describes may not be historically authenticated.” Basically, the approach is to trace the evolution of Ramayana from Valmiki’s Sanskrit version and see how it has developed literally. It also involves comparison between the different telling or variant of the epic and the corresponding local culture. The text is critically approached and analyzed keeping the social, political, economical background in mind. Also



included is the geographical factor which may influence the epic.

A.K. Ramanujan's 300 'Ramayanas' has adopted a very historical and critical approach to the different Ramayanas. The author has aptly analyzed the difference in the various versions of Ramayana i.e. Valmiki's version, Kampan's Version, Jain version, Thai version etc. Not only has he illustrated the comparison between the narration of the same event in two different ways in two different telling but also has shown how the local culture and situation of a particular community is reflected in the Ramayana they read e.g. the Jain version, Thai version etc. In this context, Ramanujan has indeed reviewed the epic in true historic and literary sense. Sreedharan E., A textbook of Historiography; 500 BC to AD 2000 [Noida, Oriental Black Swan, 2004, Print.] P.g. no. 6-7, Ibid P.g.no. 7, Supra fn 3, Ibid.

#### **RAMAYANA AS WE KNOW-**

A.K. Ramanujan has put forth five examples of Ramayana, each distinct from the other in many ways yet similar in other ways. The general perception about Ramayana? Is same or distinct Is matter of prime importance!

The poem describes the birth of Lord Ram and his apprenticeship under sage Vishvamitra. It proceeds with his wedding to mother Sita, daughter of King Janaka. However, a sad episode follows in which he is banished from his kingdom in Ayodhya and

is sent to exile because of his step mother. During their exile, enters the Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka. Enchanted by Sita's beauty, he abducts her and takes her to his capital. Despised by Sita, all his advances are rejected by her. There, Lord Ram resolves to free his wife from the captivity of Ravana. Accompanied by his brother, Lakshman, Sugreev: the monkey king, Hanuman, the monkey general and devout of Lord Ram and Ravana's brother Vibhishan, he attacks Lanka, slays Ravana and brings back Mother Sita. However, in later versions, she is ordered to undergo an ordeal by fire, to clear herself from all suspicions of infidelity. However, her chastity is still questioned and Lord Ram chooses the society's unfounded suspicions over his duties as husband and banished Mother Sita to exile. She takes shelter in the ashram of sage Valmiki, the author of Ramayana and gives birth twins, Luv and Kush. The family reunites at a later stage, but when her innocence is again questioned, she asks Mother Earth to take her back following which the Earth opens and swallows her. This is indeed a tragic end to the story. Throughout the story, Mother Sita comes out as a woman of high character, great strength and perseverance.

#### **REFERENCES:**

"Ramayana". Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/490529/Ramayana>.