

Festival of Ramkatha - 12th - 15th March, 2008

Abstract and Bio-data of the Participants

Ram Legend: A Multifaceted Cultural Penetration in Northeast India

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The exact time of the arrival of the Ram legend in the Brahmaputra valley in the Northeast India is very difficult to ascertain due to the absence of concrete archaeological evidences. The oral tradition in all probability ensued after the percolation of the Vedic culture in 5th-6th century A.D. as evidenced by the existence of the Dah Parvatia temple of Gupta period (6th century A.D.) in the middle Assam. It is believed that the Ram legend followed the Vedic tradition. The question that the oral tradition preceded the textual tradition in this part of the country is yet to be ascertained.

The proliferation of the Ram legend in multiple forms in the northeast India is a late phenomenon. This could be concluded from a single source, which somehow preceded neighboring textual traditions in the Gangetic plains. The very first textual evidence relating to episode of Ramayana in old Assamese by a Sanskrit scholar, Harivara Vipra is believed to be composed in 13th –14th century A.D. This was followed by a major translation of Ramayana by Madhav Kandali reported to be in the 15th century A.D. This text in fact opened floodgate of Ram legend in multi-faceted forms the Brahmaputra valley.

However, the main thrust of this proliferation could be seen in the period of the neo-Vaishnava movement initiated by Srimanta Sankardeva in 16th century A.D. The initiative came readily from the Vaishnava Satra (monastery) as a part of religious activities. It resulted in both tangible and intangible cultural properties. The Satra institution carried forward this legacy for more than five hundred years and gave continued impetus both at the folk as well as at the classical level.

Whatever little we find today in this region is equally significant as in other regions of India. All the cultural materials connected with the Ram legend could be categorized into the following:

1. Ram legend in textual and literary tradition
2. Ram legend in Performing art tradition
3. Ram legend in Folk tradition
4. Ram legend in tribal tradition.

In this paper an attempt will be made to find out the extent of the multifaceted manifestation of Ram legend in Assam as an integral part of the social and cultural life of the people.

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Archaeology of Rama-Katha

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Archaeology of Rama-katha has to be understood keeping in view three main issues: place-names associated with the events in the Rama-katha; evidence in art; and material remains, if any, found from sites mentioned in the Rama-katha. There still are several places bearing names as given in the Rama story; whether these names suggest veracity of and connection with events or are simply apocryphal is a matter that requires serious study. As for art, plentiful examples are to be seen in sculpture, bronzes, terracotta, painting, etc. Ranging from very early times and covering almost the entire length and breadth of the country and even beyond, these buttress the fact that Rama-katha has very widespread appeal. As for material remains, excavations (and explorations) at sites associated with the Ram story have yielded evidence of occupation for several centuries. The paper seeks to present the Archaeology of Rama-katha keeping in view these main points.

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The Oral Rendition of Rama-Sitamani Varta; and its Socio-cultural Context

BHAGWAN DAS PATEL

The Rama-Sitamani Varta belongs to the Bhil Adivasis of North Gujarat. It is an oral text divided into thirty cantos (pankhudia/prasang parava). The Rama-Sitamani Varta is an integral part of Bhil life and society. The epics of such dimensions as Rama-Sitamani Varta usually narrate stories that encompass three to four generations and include several episodes and cantos. The Bhil Rama Varta is in verse form and is sung to the accompaniment of song, dance and music. It is closely linked with rituals and religious belief system of the community.

The women characters in Rama-Sitamani Varta are very strong and empowered, which reflects the mother oriented culture of the Bhils.

Ramayana in Performance: Garhwal Himalaya

D.R. PUROHIT

The paper presents a brief survey of the Ramayana performances in Garhwal Himalaya and attempts at the theatrical and ethno-musical analysis of some of them. Ramayana, is both sung and performed in the folk traditions of Uttarakhand. The variants are the circular dances called thul khel of Pithoragarh, the Ramman of Alaknanda valley, Sita Lodi ritual and ballad of Pauri district, the Ramman of Mandakini valley, and the Sitaran text of the Mahasu temples in Tons valley.

The Ramman of Alaknanda valley is performed partially in several villages around Joshimath town but elaborately in Saloor- Dungra, Barosi and Selang villages. It is a term given to the annual re-enactment of the life of Rama. The performance is held on 25th or 26th of April every year. Total structure of the performance is governed by several episodes in the story of Rama. After a fixed number of episodes, masked characters showcasing the tableaux and dramas of several mythical and human characters enter and exit the performance arena.

However the main ritual performance is the 18 tal dance of Rama, Laksman, Sita and Hanuman. The dance is performed to the beats of dhol, damaun, trumpets and cymbals and to the text sung parallel. The traditional singer of Rama's history is Bhalda, a corruption on the word Bhat, who is invited from Bhalgaun, the village of traditional singers. The Bhaldas is assisted in singing by the elders of the village. The narration begins at 8.00a.m. in the morning, and continues till 6.00p.m. in the evening. There are no dialogues exchanged or mimetic action presented in the arena; the dance gestures are the mime themselves. The medium here is pure dance supported by the corresponding text of the ballad.

Another Ramayana performance is held in about a dozen of villages in the upper Alaknanda valley on the concluding Banyat(Yajna in vana, forest). The villagers gather every day in a circular dance in the late

evening and sing the narrative of Rama. At the end of the dance an arti is offered to the embodied characters of Rama, Laksman, Sita and Hanuman.

In Kedarnath valley, Ramman is sung on the occasion of Baisakhi by a group of dancers in a moving circle. The narrative is sung continuously for two days and ends with a dramatic enactment of Lanka Dahan.

The paper aims at making an analysis of the theatrical and musical text of Ramayana in Uttarakhand with particular reference to that of Alaknanda and Mandakini valleys.

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Sita Worship: Social Response of the Folk Society of Garhwal Himalaya to Ramkatha

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If we go by historical records and references we have the evidences to prove that Rama and his story was in some form or the other present in the Garhwal Himalaya at least by 9th century A.D. Later on it gained ground and wider popularity in the Himalayan society.

In the present paper an attempt will be made to establish the historicity of the transmission of Ramkatha in Garhwal Himalaya and its response to the same. In general Ramkatha of Tulasi Ramcharitmanas is the major source of transmission of the story of Rama in the folk society and the response is the same as in other parts of the country i.e. Rama the hero has the leading personality. But in Garhwal Himalaya there are pockets where a different response is noticed. Sita, and not Rama is worshipped and she has been adopted as a family member in the society. Here we would be taking up the issue of Sita worship in certain pockets of the society and try to understand the practice in social context. Sita worship is prevalent in a small part of Pauri and Chamoli Garhwal. This seems to be a practice of more than three centuries.

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Ramayana Text: Transformations in Transmission-The case of Kerala's Pavakoothu Text and Kamban's Tamil version**K. NACHIMUTHU**

Ramakatha is very popular in the Tamil and Malayalam traditions as an epic and in various forms of folk forms and other plastic arts in the secular and religious domains. Ramayana was not very popular in ancient times as Mahabharata. However, the earliest of the concise Ramayana was sung by Vaisnava poets like Kulasekhara Azhwar and Periyazhwar (A.D.6-9). Kulasekhara Azhwar and Poet Ilango Adigal the author of Tamil epic Cilappatikaram (Circa A.D.2-4) both belonging to Kerala testify to the growing popularity of the story in Kerala.

After the separation of Tamil and Malayalam the Tamil versions of Ramayana especially Kamban's version of Ramayana has exerted great influence on the writers of Ramayana in Kerala. Ramacaritam Kannasa Ramayanam, Ramakathappattu and Adhyatma Ramayanam of Malayalam bear evidence to it. Apart from the literary transmission Kamban's version of Ramayana was the source for the Pavakoothu, puppet performance popular in the Palakkadu region of Kerala. Performers of this puppet dance migrated from the Tamil region. Performances are arranged during the temple festivals dedicated to Kali. The performance text is based on the Kamban's Ramayana. The Ramayana is narrated in 21 parts or episodes. The text is interspersed with poetry and prose, based on the selection of 2500 songs from the 12116 songs of Kamban's original composition. The performance is done with 130 puppets. There were about 60 theatres in older times.

Based on the analysis of Balakandam puppetry text published by Krishnan Kutty Pulavar, it is found that only eleven patalams are retained in the puppet text among the 23 patalams in Kamban's literary text. Among the 1312 verses only 181 are selected. In Mithilaikkatcippatalam only 17 songs are chosen out of 157 total verses.

Even though the text of the puppet performance follows Kamban it is rewritten as a script for performance taking into consideration the demands of the visual medium, audience and the total atmosphere of the performance context. The various aspects of transformations in transmission is identified and delineated in the present study.

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Raasdhari Performance of Ramkatha in Mewar

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The paper focuses on Raasdhari Ramlila of Mewar. Though Raas is ordinarily associated with Krishan Leela, however in the Mewar region of Rajasthan, Raas is associated Ram and is known as Raasdhari. It is a folk form and staged in the open. Though this tradition is extinct now, the songs that were part of the tradition are still popular in the region.

Ramkatha in Oral narratives and folk performance of Orissa

MAHENDRA KUMAR MISHRA

Ramkatha is a universal cultural tradition in the folk life of Orissa encompassing the urban, rural and tribal. While Ramkatha is performed in oral tradition as aural performance (srabya kavya), the same is also performed in visual epic (drusya kavya). Ramakatha is reinterpreted by many castes and tribes in their local imagination. This is evident in the oral narratives, myths, oral epics, legends, riddles and proverbs, naming and paintings. Most important aspect of Orissa culture is association of Ramkatha in the socio-religious life of the people. There are some rites and rituals which reflect the importance of Ramakatha.

The space of Orissa identified with the characters and events of Ramayana is most important in terms of reconstructing the history of Ramayana. The mountains like Ramagiri, river Savari and Tamasa, forest like Dandakaranya and Malyavantagiri, and sacred center like Patalaganga are some of the examples. Interestingly while South-western Orissa is popular for Ramaleela, North-eastern Orissa is popular for Krishna leela.

Sri Jagannath Temple is associated with the episode of Ramayana and many local traditions are connected with the characters and events of Ramayana. One such example is that Bibhisana use to come to visit Lord Jagannath in the form of a black bee, is still in the social memory of the people. Besides, Jagamohana Ramayana written by Poet Balarama Das in 16th century is full of local imaginations which is not found in Sanskrit Ramayana.

Even today the tribal world of Orissa recapitulates the memory of Ramakatha in their oral narratives, songs and legends. Some oral epics are reinterpreted with a structure of the Ramayana.

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Folk Drama in West Bengal and the Story of Rama

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Popularly, we think of the story of Rama as having percolated into folk narrative and performative traditions from the classical Sanskrit source attributed to Valmiki . But if we think of the *Ramayana* of Valmiki itself as a composite text, combining various elements derived from diverse oral traditions circulating in different localities (not necessarily within the Indian sub-continent) in different historical periods, then the previously-mentioned assumptions have to be turned upside down . If Valmiki is regarded as the compiler rather than originator of the Rama-myth, then the *Ramayana* of Valmiki may be read as a Sanskritized version of elements coming from folk-sources. From this point of view, when we look at the performance of kushan or *Ramayana-jhumur* or at renderings of the Ramayana story through puppetry in rural West Bengal, we may indeed say that we have a return to the origins of *Rama-Katha* where the narrative resources of the people and the oral traditions which still survive among them are being used to break down the canons of dominant culture. The folk-performer does not submit to these canons passively, but brings significant and creative disruptions into them.

The vernacular language flourished immensely in medieval Bengal under the patronage of the Sultanate of *Gaud* and translated versions both of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* came to be composed. The best-known translation into the vernacular of the *Ramayana* was by Krittibas and it was composed with courtly patronage. Obviously Krittibas was an educated man with knowledge of Sanskrit, but his compositions not only became part of the literate tradition, but were also sung and disseminated orally. Thus, Krittibas' *Ramayana* was not an exact rendering of Valmiki's epic, but in the form in which it has come down to us there are many episodes which are not to be found in the original and which considerably modify the emotive and the ideological ambience . The same can be said of the other versions that have survived such as the *Ramayana* by a woman composer Chandravati. These texts, which were part of the literate tradition, and at the same time continued to be rendered orally among the people, perhaps provided an impetus to the story being adapted into various popular performative forms. But the chicken-and-egg question still remains. The story of Mahiravana which forms a very popular part of the repertoire of folk-drama, but which is not to be found in Valmiki, occurs in Krittibas' rendering of the story. But is it not very possible that the legend of a powerful demon-king dwelling in the depths of the earth had been there in oral traditions and Krittibas simply included it in his narration?

Folk performances have distinctive qualities. For one thing, they are essentially episodic and unhurried. Depending on the requirements of a particular performance, some parts may be prolonged and others may be curtailed. The performance is interspersed with many digressions and choric interventions. The performance very often diverges from the basic text used for rehearsals. The distance between the performers and the audience being minimal, the illusory devices of proscenium theatre are also largely absent. The representations, while they are often highly idealized and distantiated (to use a Brechtian term), also have an earthiness and a subversive thrust which might have seemed quite inappropriate if the effort to create verisimilitude through illusory devices had been there. As it is, the tone of the performance moves quite easily from one extreme to another, high seriousness alternating with the comic and the grotesque.

The above is only a very general description of folk performance and obviously modifications to suit changing tastes of the audience occur all the time. Some of the performative forms such as *kathakata* still have close connections with religious or ritual occasions, but others have a completely secular character so that the mood is of relaxed entertainment. This paper explores how the story of Rama is transformed under the above-mentioned circumstances to acquire levels of significance which allow it to merge into the tenor of popular life and how, in the process, it creates a space of resistance to dominant culture. I shall take my example largely from a kushan performance from North Bengal, but in the course of the discussion, I shall also make cross-references to other folk-forms which use the myth of Rama.

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Living Ramayanas of the Adivasis of Gujarat: A Study

NILA SHAH

The Ramayana, one of the established epics of India, with many a variant in different Indian languages is a vibrant phenomenon. Some indigenous languages in our country have a live and animated tradition of singing/performing their own versions of this epic. More often than not, as it is observed, such versions not only vary considerably from their counterparts of Margi traditions, but also subvert the form and the text, blurring the dividing lines between the core and the margins.

The paper will focus primarily on the two existing versions of the epic prevailing in the state of Gujarat, Rom-Sitmani Varta, the Ramayana of the Dungari Bhil tribe of North Gujarat and Kunkana Ramkatha, that of the Kunkana tribe of South Gujarat. These two texts of the oral tradition can be studied as 'pre-texts' and also on the basis of dissimilarities; the presentation shall dwell upon their respective spatial-temporal and socio-cultural aspects and some postulations regarding their origins and collateral influences/exchanges with the margi traditions of the Ramayana. Such studies, taken collectively, can engender a continuous dialogue between desi and margi, and written and oral versions; and would further our understanding of the plural nature of our culture and literature.

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Ramkatha Alive in Performance

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Ramkatha has been performed for hundreds of years but continues to be relevant to life today. In his study of folk performers in Karnataka, A.K. Ramanujan observed they humanize, localize, and contemporize classical stories. My talk will demonstrate that the same is true of Ramkatha performances in other parts of India. For example, in a Malayalam folktale, Hanuman insists on sitting at Rama's feet so that when he sneezes, Hanuman can wish him long life; the sneeze marks Rama as subject to the bodily needs of a human. Ramkatha is localized in Assam, where hill women have specialized in weaving; there, Sita is characterized as a fine weaver. A Marathi story shows the topical humor of contemporizing: Rama learns that a wretched dog took rebirth in that form because in his previous life, he practiced financial corruption.

I also consider three other processes: incorporation of figure who interprets the performance for the audience, the addition of local deities, and motifs of multiplication. Humor is crucial to the Komali role in Tamil street drama. Performers incorporate local deities into Ramkatha, such as Goddess Bhagavati in Kerala, Kali in Bengal, and the Goddess of Sleep in Telugu tales. Multiplying occurs in the story of Peacock Ravana when, after 10-headed Ravana is slain, a 100-headed cousin shows up to revenge his death. My talk shows how these processes keep Ramayana tradition fluid, alive and relevant to current events.

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Ram Katha and Performative spaces:

P. BILIMALE

Yakshagana Ramayanas

Even though Yakshagana emerged as a unique art form today, it has multiple existences in Karnataka. *Doddata*, *Sannata*, *Moodalapaya* and *Paduvalapaya* are its regional variations. *Moodalapaaya* is performed in northern parts of Karnataka and *Paduvalapaya* is popular in coastal Karnataka which includes the districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Shimoga, Chikkamagalur, Coorg and in the adjoining areas like Kasaragodu of Kerala State. The coastal Yakshagana again has two main variations called *tenku tittu* (ie Southern style) and *Badagu Tittu* (Northern style). Both styles have a night long stage performances with music, dance, costumes and dialogues. *Talamaddale* is another form which has only spoken word. My paper intends to examine the creation of Ram Katha in southern style of Yakshagana.

It is a difficult task for any scholar to comprehend the Ram Katha creation in Yakshagana due to its diversity and magnanimity. There are about thirty-two professional troupes performing more than 3000 Ram centered Yakashaganas and more than 1500 amateur troupes perform an average of 1000 Rama centered episodes. We could also listen to more than 1500 *Talamaddale* performances all over year. At an average of 500 audience per performance, about 35,00,000 people watch Ram Katha every year in a small area of coastal Karnataka.

Ram Katha in Yakashagana has three levels of texts. First, there is a Prasanga text written by various authors, mainly by Parti Subba during the early decades of 18th century. The second text is intricately produced lyric compositions based on these episodes in various meters set to different *talas* as a musical text. Finally, there is a verbal text, which elevates the first text into a visual text. During this stage, the actor is free to use all of his resources like scriptures, plays, literature, society, politics, and practically everything. This creates an interesting pattern of Ram Katha, which is very unique to each production. With the entry of scholar artistes in to Yakshagana, the third or 'verse world' attained new dimensions. The actors do not take the concept of being loyal to the first or written text seriously. Thus, the Ram Katha actors in Yakshagana are not translators, but re-creators of the episodes. For example, A Ravana in Yakshagana, often questions the propriety of Rama's behavior at Panchavati, and accuses him of colonizing of the Rakshasa territory. Vali and Ravana are portrayed as the champions of the downtrodden, fighting for equality and question the credentials of the Kings of Ayodhya including Rama. My paper intends to explain the recreation process of Ram Katha in Yakshagana.

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Theatre of Akhyana in Indian Tradition

RADHAVALLABH TRIPATHI

Akhyana has been an ingredient of Vedic ritual. In Ashvamedha Yajna, the horse having been sent out for the digvijaya, various Akhyanas, named as Pariplava Akhyanas, were presented continuously or one year at the place where the ritual was initiated. The Akhyanas of Pururavas and Urvashi, Harishchandra etc. occur in Vedic literature. The representation of these Akhyanas formed the theatre of Akhyana. An Akhyana been defined as a grand narrative to be presented through recitation of a text, songs and abhinaya. It stands in close relationship with Upakhyana, which has been defined as a minor story occurring within the framework of a discourse, a tale retold by one of the characters of the Akhyana for enlightenment of another character. Both Ramayana and Mahabharata have been termed as Akhyanas, as they were presented through recitation of a text, songs and abhinaya.

One of the Vedic Akhyanas, i.e., the Akhyana of Pururavas and Urvashi, was taken up by Kalidasa in his Vikramorvashiyam to be developed into a complete drama. However, in the terminology of Natyashastra, Vikramorvashiyam is not a Nataka. It is Trotaka or Totaka. The difference between a Nataka and a Totaka perhaps lies in the adoption of tenets of Akhyana theatre in the latter.

Sometimes an Upakhyana presented independently as a grand narrative assumes the form of an Akhyana and vice versa. There are a number of Upakhyanas in the Mahabharata, like Shakuntalopakhyana, Savitryupakhyana, Nalopakhyana, Yayatyupakhyana. They have subsequently assumed the form of Akhyanas. On the contrary, Rama's story, a grand narrative, becomes an Uphkhyana, Ramopakhyana, within the body of the Mahabharata.

The theatre of Akhyana brought in the Sutradhara into fore front. Sutradhara forms a link between the world of story and the time and place in which the narrative is being presented. It was this theatre that led to the development of a form like Harikatha and Jatra; and the plays by authors like Umapati Upadhyaya, Vidyapati, Shankaradeva and various other authors between 12th to 18th centuries were written under its overpowering impact. Also it is this theatre which has led to the emergence of forms like Pandavani and Bundeli Ramayana etc. during the recent centuries.

Various genres sprout out from the trunk of Ramakatha

RAGHAVAN PAPPANAD

Ramakatha disseminated and infiltrated in to the life of the people of Kerala and it got various manifestations both in orality and literacy, verbal and performance, folklore and classical lore. This paper is an analytical account of what all different texts are available in Kerala and if possible, try to explain the intertextuality of these texts.

As far as common folks are concerned orality (in the sense that opposite to literacy) was the only medium of communication and therefore some how, through various sources when the Ramakatha disseminated among them, they perceived, assimilated and re-created through various tiny genres such as proverb and riddles and elaborate ritual festivals as kaliyattom in Andallurkavu. Apart from this verbal literature also so many.

Dissemination is common from orality to literacy and vice-versa. So it is not possible to make any comments on the generic transformation or generic transfer in this regard. The history of the dissemination of Ramakatha in literacy begins with 'cheeramacharitham' and it continues its tradition through 'chinthavistayaya seetha' by Kumaranasan and through so many poems of contemporary poets. Besides this, Kerala created few genres of performances of Ramakatha - tiny performances such as 'seethakali and kathakali with the theme of Ramakatha that to perform for days together.

One of the main observations of this paper is that even though, Ramakatha could assimilate in to or infiltrate in to various expressive forms of Kerala folk irrespective of cast, economic status etc. , at a certain extent it was reluctant to influence on the ritual / metaphysical expressive system both folk and elite that have been in existence.

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Ram Katha and the Oral Tradition

ROMA CHATTERJI

The paper will focus on the 'katha' aspect of the Ram *katha*. In the folk traditions of Bengal, *kathas* are distinguished from other modes of story telling, kahani for instance, in that they are true rather than made up. This fact has implications for the way that they are structured; i.e. characters and events occupy multiple registers simultaneously and the stories do not have definite beginnings and endings. Unlike historical events that occur in diachronic time they are always already there – a world created by the *katha* tradition that story tellers and their audiences come to occupy. Even though, as narratives, stories in the *katha* tradition unfold and have durational depth, their primary time dimension is synchronic. Story tellers move back and forth in time and through different orders of time that are structured through different genres and narrative contexts. Thus the Ram *katha* is not a fixed text as it has no boundaries. Rather it is an emergent event that is renewed every time it is performed. It is the performative context that delineates the context of the text. The paper will explore this idea by examining some of the different genres through which the Ram *katha* emerges, asking what re-mapping the location of the Ram *katha* does – whether in riddle, song or painting – to the *katha* itself.

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Ramayana in Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills”

SYLVANUS LAMARE

In my paper, I will try to show how Ramayana came to be related closely with the Khasis and the Jaiñtias. Among the Jaiñtias, it is generally believed that the Ramayana traditions came from the present day Bangladesh since the Jaiñtia Rajas controlled a sizable territory in that country. The Jaiñtia Rajas adopted Hinduism to be close to his subjects who were Hindus. The subjects in the summer capital of the Jaiñtia Raja at Nartiang also accepted Hinduism to be close to their Raja. In fact, at Nartiang there is a Durga Mandir and a Shiv Mandir which is believed to be close to a thousand years old. The present High Priest of the temple is the 29 generation of the Deshmukh Brahmin family. At Nartiang one can see the blend of tribal element of religion with Hinduism. Among the Jaiñtias the story of Ram came to be closely related in the naming ceremony of children especially twins. The presence of good oranges and lime stones in the Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills are also attributed by a certain group of people to the story of Ramayana.

About 50 to 60 years back the chanting of the story of Ram was a common practice among the villagers in Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills. Even the enactment of certain themes from the story of Ram was found among many theatrical groups. Unfortunately, such important performances are lost forever and only stray references are found.

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Ramayana Traditions in Kannada : Historical Formation, Sustenance, Continuity and Transmission

T.S. SATYANATH

This paper attempts to look at representations of Ramayana tradition in Kannada as pluralistic epistemologies, suggesting categories such as gender, caste, religion, sect, form and language. They not only interconnect with each other but also protect the rights of such categories over their knowledge systems. Furthermore representations, be they scripto-centric (writing traditions), phono-centric (oral traditions) or body-centric (performing traditions), tend to become in-group activities meant for the exclusive consumption of the categorical groups who are rightful owners of such knowledge systems. At the same time, though different groups share a pluralistic epistemology, which enables them to understand and appreciate each other's epistemology, their group-specific rights over knowledge, remain protected through multiple representations, implying monopolistic controls. It was through such cultural transactions that medieval Karnataka was able to sustain its pluralistic knowledge systems intact and alive. Like many other textual traditions of India, *Ramayana* too is sectarian in nature and has multiple representational traditions. There are several versions of *Ramayana* in Kannada in textual, oral and performing traditions and belong to sectarian traditions like Brahminical Hinduism, Jainism, folk, tribal etc. They have made use of the scripto-centric, phono-centric and body-centric modes of representations and are transmitted through *gamaka-vacana* recitations, performing traditions such as *yakshaganas*, and also through sculpture and painting. Treating the coexistence and continuation of such multiple

representations of textual traditions and their transmission strategies as pluralistic epistemologies, the paper problematizes the processes of historical formation, sustenance, continuity and transmission of Ramayana traditions in the medieval Kannada cultural context.

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Ramkatha and Performative Traditions

VASANT NIRGUNE

The paper focuses on the theatrical aspects and such forms as drama, dance-drama and lila performances based on Ramkatha. Valmiki Ramyana and Tulsidas Ram Charit Manas are at the base of lilas performances. The presentation explores some of these traditions in different regions of India.

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Folk Elements in the Rama-katha Tradition

VIDYACHAND THAKUR

Himachal Pradesh is geographically divided into valleys and mountainous terrains. The region is inhabited by tribals and non-tribals. Both ecologically and culturally, the state can be divided into distinct zones. The legends, ballads and songs based on Rama theme are available among inhabitants of both foothills and higher mountainous regions. The Himachali Ramakathas retain thematic unity with the main plot of Valmiki's Ramayana, and at the same time each has a unique and distinct flavor imparted to it by local culture and narrative repertoire. Adaptability of the text to local culture adds to its attraction, comprehension and preservation.

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