

# ILLUSTRATED RAMAYANA ANUSCRIPTS

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The Indian art and thought have been overwhelmingly influenced by Ramayana its impact can be felt in whole of South East Asia. Ramayana is still very popular has been translated in all the major Indian languages. before the advent of printing technology it was hand written various mediums (paper, cloth, bark, palm leaf) and were also illustrated. The illustrated copies of Ramayana have become prized possession of collectors. Substantial number of these are in the libraries and museums abroad. The paintings in these manuscripts throw light on the development of various schools in India. Although the art of miniature painting is centuries old, the art reached new heights during the Mughal period and after the disintegration of the Mughal empire it got patronage under small rulers in Himachal, Rajasthan, Bundelkhand, Malwa, Ahmednagar, Golkonds, Tanjore, Orissa etc. Under the influence of new geographic locations and rulers it began to develop an idiom of its own and respective school of miniature paintings began to develop.

*Ramayana* with text in Telugu, early 18th century, is housed in Hyderabad State Museum. Figures, costumes and ornaments in the manuscripts are adopted by the artist from the post-Vijyanagra tradition. Similarly illustrated *Ramayana* of the Mughal period reflects the Mughal costumes and dresses. Mughal king Akbar got Ramayana translated into Persian. One such imperial copy of the *Ramayana* is in Swai Man Singh Museum, Jaipur. Akbar also gave orders to make copies of these available for wider dissemination. One such copy is presently in the Freer Gallery, Washington. The imperial copy of the *Ramayana* is illustrated profusely by the master artists.

The *Pahari Ramayana* miniature series are less complex technically but there is delicacy in the outline and scheme of colours used. Except Orissa where palm leaf has been used the material used in the rest of India is paper. the early examples of Orissa illustrated palm leaf manuscripts are not coloured. The 18th century manuscripts have sharply pointed features.

The Kingdom of Mewar was one of the most prolific centres and its capital Udaipur was the hub of the artistic activities. The illustrated manuscripts of Ramayana produced here in the mid 17th century are now housed in Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay; British Library, London; Rajasthan Oriental Research Centre, Udaipur. The characteristic feature of these paintings in the manuscripts are the bold outline drawing, vibrant palette and several consecutive scenes in one frame. The illustrated manuscripts from Rajasthan are complex and used to take years together for completion. The Malw school illustrated Ramayana manuscripts are housed in Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi and also in the collection of Kanoria Private collection Patna.

During colonial rule in India the valuable illustrated manuscripts including *Ramayana* found their way abroad and we were bereft of this priceless treasure. IGNCA has documented these manuscripts in the reprographic form. the illustrations in these manuscripts were copied in the slide form in order to better appreciate the miniature paintings. The slide unit of the IGNCA has 1386 slides on *Ramayana*. Below is the list of collection, date of the manuscripts and the total number of slides available in IGNCA on *Ramayana*.

S.NO.	COLLECTION	PERIOD	NO. OF SLIDE
<b>1</b>	<b>British Library</b>		
(i)	Ramayana	19th C.	632
(ii)	- do -	1712 A.D.	90
(iii)	- do -	1803-04 A.D.	85
(iv)	- do -	1693 A.D.	8
(v)	- do -	1712 A.D.	512
<b>2.</b>	<b>Victorial &amp; Albert Museum</b>		
(i)	Ramayana	1899 C. 34	
(ii)	- do -	C. 1982 A.D.	11
(iii)	- do -	C. 1860 A.D.	1
(iv)	- do -	C. 1825 A.D.	1
(v)	- do -	C. 1825 A.D.	1
(vi)	- do -	C. 1670 A.D.	1
(vii)	- do -	C. 1820 A.D.	1
(viii)	- do -	19th C	1
(ix)	- do -	Late 19th C	1
(x)	- do -	Late 19th C	1
(xi)	- do -	C. 1890 A.D.	1
<b>3</b>	<b>Raza Library, Rampur</b>		
(i)	Ramayana	C 19th A.D.	5

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