THE RAMAYANAS IN TAMIL AND TELUGU LITERATURE – A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Submitted to

TAMILNADU STATE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION,
CHENNAI-600 005

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Minor Research Project Schemes for Teachers of Government Arts and Science Colleges in Tamilnadu

This Council Letter D.O.Rc.No.570/2012A

OCTOBER, 2015
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INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the two immortal epic not only form the Indian Culture but also provide inspiration to the writers, ancient and modern, in almost all the languages of the country. The profound study of Kamba Ramayana seeks to present to the world the greatness of the immortal epic of Hindu Culture as portrayed by the greatest of Tamil Poets. The story of the Ramayana as narrated by Valmiki, has attracted the Telugu and Tamil poets, old and modern, and the story is narrated in every branch of literature from the classical type of Kavya to the fold song. Sung by the unlettered.

It is worthy of note that in Tamil, a Ramayana was written even in the Sangam Period. Even though Telugu does not have a Ramayana written in the earliest times, namely before the 12th century, still it is worth mentioning that there are several proverbs and similes relating to the Ramayana Story. This shows that the story have been in vogue in the Telugu Country from very early times, though it came to be written only in later years.

Among the complete Ramayana available in Telugu, Ranganatha Ramayana written by Guna Buddha Reddi appears to be earliest. He may regarded as the author of the poem till we get convincing evidence to the effect that Ranganatha was its author, Though some Telugu scholars regard the Bhaskara
Ramayananam as a faithful rendering of the Valmiki Ramayana, still it may be said that the Ranganatha Ramayananam is a popular work in Telugu, read and appreciated by scholars and laymen alike. Another unique feature of this great poem is the introduction of several episodes which are not found in the original. Further, some of the minor characters like Sulochana are well depicted in this work.

The Tamil and the Telugu Versions do not follow the Sanskrit original in all its details, though they are faithfully to the original in respect of the main incidents of the story. In other words the Tamil and Telugu poets have exercised some freedom in developing the story without sacrificing the spirit of original.

It appears that the story of Rama has been greatly popularized in the Tamil Country by the alwars through their soul filling pasurams and that Kamban has given a permanent place to it in the history of Tamil Literature through has immortal work. Eventhough the Rama cult may have attracted the Telugu people more than any other cult.

Some of the details, as given in the Telugu folk songs, are found to be very close to those mentioned in Kamba Ramayananam. So also, some of the folk songs in Tamil contain more interesting episode which are not found in Kamba Ramayananam and Baskara Ramayananam. From the above, it appears that there
should have been some common stories or beliefs regarding the Ramayana among the Talugu and Tamil peoples.

**OBJECTIVES**

The Human and Heroic Rama and Valmiki’s poem has been deified in both Tamil and Telugu Ramayanas, just as in the other language versions. This appears understandable because Rama had become an avatar of Vishnu (God – Incarnate) by the time of Ramayana came to be written in the original languages of Indian States. The Bhakti movement, as prevalent in those days, may have helped to a considerable degree in popularizing this idea. However, it may be mentioned that Tamil and Telugu Ramayana have depicted Rama God – Incarnate with Human Attributes.

**HYPOTHESIS**

It is also interesting that the old poets in Tamil or Telugu did not attempt any exact translation of Valmiki’s epic. It may be said it was not their intention to translate the Sanskrit epic verbatim, but to give their readers the story as presented in the original. It is only in modern times that faithful translations of Valmiki’s Ramayana came to be written in Telugu and Tamil. In Telugu, we find several faithful translations of the original done in verse and prose, while translations in prose are only available in Tamil.
Methodology

The methodology followed in this project are given as follows.

Data Collection

The researcher collected data from primary sources, ie., from original text book of Tamil Kambaramayana and English Translations of Telugu Ramayanas.

Content Analysis

Content Analysis is a research technique for making inference by objectively and systematically identifying. Specified characteristics of contents documents. This is method of data collection and analysis. This is used for gathering data from written original text books, archival records, documents, news papers, magazines, diaries, letters, minutes of meetings and the like. The content of the written materials serves as a basis of inference. The analysis is made objectively and systematically.

The researcher has made an elaborate study on the Tamil and Telugu Ramayana separately. These data are collected and analyzed in a systematic form. Analysis have been made on the basis of the contents. Then and finally, a comparative study will be applied.
Work Plan

The subject matter of this project study will be discussed in five chapters excluding of research introduction and findings. They are as follows.

Introduction
1. Ramayana, the National Epic
2. The Ramayana in Tamil Literature
3. The Ramayana in Telugu Literature
4. The Ramayana in Folk Songs
5. Deviations from Valmiki in Tamil and Telugu Ramayana

Conclusion

APPENDIX

Appendix I - Works in Tamil based on or about the Ramayanas
Appendix II - Works in Telugu based on or about the Ramayanas

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CHAPTER – I

RAMAYANA, THE NATIONAL EPIC
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RAMAYANA, THE NATIONAL EPIC

Age of the Ramayana

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the two immortal epics, not only form the basis of Indian Culture but also provide inspiration to the writers, ancient and modern, in almost all the languages of the country. The significance of these epics is three fold – literary, religious and ethical. The Ramayana is called Vedasama equal to the Veda while the Mahabharata is known as Panchama Veda, the fifth veda. ‘These works are India’.¹

The Ramayana is generally regarded as the first poem in Sanskrit literature and its author Valmiki, the first poet, who was also known as Bhargava and Prachetasa. The importance of this great epic lies in the fact that it is at once a great biography of a great hero Rama, the God – incarnate, and also a poem of unsurpassed beauty. ‘Probably, no work of world literature secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the Ramayana, says A.A.Macdonell².

The genesis of the Ramayana story probably lies in the Rig Veda in the fight between Indra and Vritrasura, Sita being mentioned as the goddess of agriculture. But this reference is apparently too faint to be regarded seriously, for the story of the Ramayana as such has not been given in any recognizable form³.
Although Valmiki is traditionally believed to be the author of the Ramayana in its present form, he is according to the modern research findings, credited with the authorship of only five books (II to VI). It was probably composed in the third century B.C. on the basis of some ancient ballads current in those days. In other words, the first book, Bala Kanda and the seventh book, Uttarakanda, are later interpolations and that the Ramayana has not come down to us in its purest original form.

Regarding the composition of the original Ramayana, T.R. Sesha Iyengar says: ‘The original Ramayana was composed when the ancient Ayodhya had not yet been destroyed, but was still the chief city of Kosala, when its new name Sakera was unknown, and before the seat of government was transferred to Sravasti.

C.V. Vaidya perceptively remarks: ‘It essentially belongs to that ancient period of Indian history when sacrifice was the most distinguishing feature of Aryan worship, when Buddhism was unknown, when idol-worship did not exist, when Brahmina and Kshatriyas freely ate animal food, when women learnt the Vedas and performed Vedic rites, when Kshatriyas competed with Brahmins in learning and Brahmins competed with Kshatriyas in archery.

Some of the traditional scholars too feel that the present version of the Ramayana is a later development of the original Ramayana which was concise. It
is believed that Valmiki, the Prakrit grammarian who is said to have lived in the second century A.D., may have developed the brief story of the original Ramayana into a big epic. It is also suggested that the present Ramayana was composed on the basis of the original Ramayana and the Ramapakkyam (Story of Rama), as found in the Vana prava of the Mahabharata. Madonell also felt that the Ramayana attained its present extent by the end of the second century A.D.

Varied are the views expressed by the scholars, both in the East and the West regarding the period of the original Ramayana. However, the critical consensus suggests the 3rd century B.C. as the probable period.

The Ramapakhyana of the Mahabharata also deserves a careful study since it is believed to have given an ‘incentive to the recasting of the Ramayana of Valmiki itself, in accordance with the new theory of Rama’s being an Avatara of Vishnu. It represents Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu and Sita as Janaka’s own daughter. She did not enter fire to prove her chastity. Further, the stories of the Uttara Kanda are not mentioned in it. In view of the above, it is believed that the Ramapakhyana may have helped in recasting the Ramayana story.

The Buddhist and the Jain Traditions

The other versions of the story of Rama, though different from the story as told by Valmiki, that deserve mention are the ancient texts of the Buddhists and the Jains.
According to the Dasaratha Jalaka, a Buddhist text of about 5th century B.C., Dasaratha was the king of Varanasi (Benares) and to his chief queen were born three children, namely, Rama Pandita (Rama the wise), Lakkhana Kumara and Sita Devi. After the death of this queen, the king married another. Bharata was born to her. The new queen persuaded the king to give the kingdom to her son. Fearing that Rama, Lakkhana Kumara and Sita would be put to trouble by the queen, if they were to stay with him, the king asked them to stay at some other place for a period of twelve years. Accordingly, they went to the Himalayas, where they lived in a hermitage. It was also predicted that the king would die in about twelve years. But after nine years, Dasaratha died. Then, the queen tried to put Bharata on the throne. But he rejected it and went to the hermitage where Rama lived and urged him to return to Varanasi; but Rama would not. Instead, he gave Bharata his wooden sandals saying that they would rule the kingdom. At the end of the twelfth year, Rama returned to the capital. He was then made king with Sita as his queen. They ruled for 16,000 years.

It is interesting to note in the above tale that the story of Ravana is absent and that Sita was married to her brother Rama\(^{12}\).

Of the two Jain versions of the Ramayana, Paumachariya written by Vimalasuri is considered the most popular and the earliest; the other being Trishashtisalakapurusha Charita by Hemachandra. Though the general outline of
the story in the Paumachariya is the same as found in Valmiki’s Ramayana (VR), several deviations from the original are noticed in it. It is that its influence is ‘marked on the Padmapurana, Adhyatma Ramayana, Ananda Ramayana, Tulasi Ramayana and his other works, Sri Rama of Malaya and Ramakiyen of Syama.

According to S.K. Belvalkar, the Paumachariya gives the story of Rama in three different places with variations in each place\textsuperscript{13}.

Of the salient features of the Jain versions, the following may be mentioned.

All the characters including Dasaratha, Rama, Ravana, Hanuman and their families are Jains. Rama like all Baladevas had eight thousand wives with Sita, Prabhavati and Sridama as the Chief Queens. Lakshmana, a Vasudeva, too was polygamous. He had sixteen thousand wives. He killed Ravana with his Chakra. Rama was a great human hero. He abstained from taking meat. He killed Vali in a straight fight. Further, there is no mention of Maricha or the golden deer. Ravana had only one head and he abducted Sita was Rama was engaged in a battle.

There existed a friendly relationship between the Vanaras and the Rakshasas. The Vanaras were of considerable assistance to Ravan in battles. Hanumna married Satyavati, the daughter of Ravana and also Anantakusuma, daughter of Surpanakha. Sita was not found in the furrow of the plough; her mother was Videha. At last, She became a Jain Nun.
From these three versions, it can be seen that Sita has been mentioned as the foster-daughter of the King Janaka according to the Hindu tradition, daughter of Dasaratha as in the Buddhist tradition, and the own daughter of Janaka according to the Jain tradition. Rama is regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu by the Hindus, as Bodhisatva by the Buddhists and as a Baladeva by the Jains. Thus, Buddhism and Jainism too have claimed Rama as a followed of their religious and moulded his story to suit their doctrines.

**Ramayana in the Puranas**

The Ramayana story is also found in following works with slightly different versions:

1. Purvadharmakhanda
2. Uttaradharmakhanda
3. Padma Purana
4. Ramattapanyupanishat
5. Hiranyagarbhas Samhita
6. Umagastya Samhita
7. Bhagavata
8. Adhyatma Ramayana
9. Vishnu Purana
10. Kurma Purana
11. Seshadharma
12. Skanda Purana
13. Mastya Purana
14. Garuda Purana
15. Vishnuyamila
16. Mokshakhanda
17. Tatvasangraha Ramayana

It can be seen from the above that the story of Rama was so popular that it found a permanent place in several purana also besides several plays and poems in
Sanskrit. However, it may be said that each purana has followed its own way in telling the details, being faithful to the main story as found in VR. Hence, some deviations from the original are noticeable in the puranas. For instance, Agni Purana does not speak of the emancipation of Ahalya, an episode of considerable importance in the Ramayana.

**The So-Called Greek Influence**

The Ramayana, which has been accepted as a Kavya, is also interpreted as a mantra sastra by some of the traditional scholars. According to some western scholars, the war that took place between Rama and Ravana is only a poetic version of the conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism in the South. Some were of the view that the Ramayana story is an allegorical representation of the Aryan conquest of the south or the expansion of the Aryan culture in the south. Which seems to be plausible in the light of the great synthesis of the Dravidian and Aryan Cultures.

However, a few scholars doubt the ‘Indianness’ of the Ramayana story one of them observes thus: ‘..... the story of Rama, as related in the Indian epic, is a very faded and distorted copy of the history of the greatest Pharaoh of ancient Egypt, Rameses II’ who is said to have reigned from 1292-1225 B.C.

The theory of the Greek influences on the Ramayana has been convincingly refuted by the western and Indian scholars. It is indeed noteworthy that some of
the western scholars have declared that the Iliad of Horner is but an echo of the Ramayana.

**Ramayana Abroad**

In this connection, it may be mentioned that the Ramayana has travelled abroad also and it has been translated into several language including English, Russian etc. It appears that the story of Rama reached Thailand and Comboida some centuries ago and it is known there by the names of Ramakien and Ramker respectively. It is also very popular in Java, Bali, Tibet, Indonesia (predominantly a Muslim Country), Siam and other far-eastern countries. Of course, the story has undergone several changes and differs from the original in nomenclature also. In some versions, Sita has been mentioned as the daughter of Ravana. She is said to have married both Rama and Ravana. Mandodari is supported to have married Dasaratha. Rama and Ravana are said to be cousins.

Despite the circulation of all these mutually, contradictory versions, the version of Valmiki alone holds firm in the popular imagination even after several centuries. It is generally regarded as the most authentic version of the story of Rama and hence appropriately enough almost all the language versions are mainly are mere literal translations of the Sanskrit original. In spite of some exact renderings of Valmiki here and there, most of the Ramayana poets in various Indian language have either freely adapted or departed from the original story of
Valmiki, resulting in so many interesting transcreations rather than merely formal translations.

**Contemporaneity of Valmiki and Rama**

The question often arises: Were Valmiki and Rama contemporaries? According to the tradition, Rama lived in the Treta Yuga and Krishna in the Dvapara Yuga. Each Tuga consists of several lakhs of years. It is said that Rama lived for eleven thousand years. So, it is now difficult to say when exactly Rama lived on the basis of the traditional evidence.

According to the tradition, Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama. He is also believed to have given shelter to Sita, when she was banished by her husband. And he taught Lava and Kusa, the sons of Sita, his Ramayana poem and it was sung by them in presence of Rama. Since these stories belong to the Uttara Kanda, considered a later addition to the main epic, the truth of these episodes is open to doubt. Further, it is said that Valmiki came to know the story of Rama through the sage Narada. This supports the view that Rama may have preceded Valmiki, and that the story of Rama was already in vogue in some form or the other when Valmiki recreated it as a poem, that was to shape a minds and hearts of countries generation of men and women.

Whether Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama or not, the fact that the poet regarded Rama as a mortal per excellence, though he deified him in a few
places, cannot be easily set aside. The deification of Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu, the Supreme deity, is believed to be the work of some later poets, for ‘Vishnu was not the Supreme Being in the Vedic cult, and the doctrine of his Avataras is foreign to the Vedic theology’. So, P.T.Srinivas Iyengar is of the view that the Ramayana of Rama’s day must have been in the Vedic dialect (‘candas’ as Panini Calls it) or in the Prakrit which was then current. Since Valmiki regarded Rama as a morial of the highest order and since the later poets could only regard him as God-Incarnate, it is felt that Valmiki though not a contemporary of Rama, may have lived at a time when Rama was not yet considered an avatar.

**Ramayana in Indian Languages**

‘In the middle ages’, says Macdonell, the Sanskrit epic was translated into the spoken languages of India, beginning with the Tamil version, which appeared at the beginning of the 12th century and was followed by adaptations and rendering in the vernaculars all over the country”. This may be true, because almost all the major Indian languages have several Ramayana versions to their credit. Though Valmiki’s Ramayana is the source book for all these versions still one can find in them several deviations from the original. This is perhaps, due to the literary traditions of the various languages or the presense of non-Valmiki stories relating to Rama and other Characters in vogue in the different parts of the country. Since the language versions are chiefly means for the those who are not
acquainted with the Sanskrit Ramayana, the poets may have thought it better to include in their works such stories or details as were prevalent in their times with the sole object of satisfying the masses in particulars and the average literates in general. Or, the poets may have consulted some versions of the Ramayana, different from Valmiki, which are not available at present.

A critical study of the various Ramayana versions available in the different languages of our country reveals the fact that every author deviates from the original in some place or the other. For instance, Divakaraprakasa Bhatta in his Kashmiri Ramayana has made several changes, the most important among them is: Sita is the daughter of Ravana\(^23\). Krittivasa Ramayana in Bengali also presents some differences, one of them being the conversions of Rama into a gentle and compassionate incarnation of the Divinity\(^24\).

The South Indian poets too have deviated from the original “The earliest Ramayana available in Kannada is that the Nagachandra, a Jain author, who is also known as Abhinava Pampa. “This is believed to have been composted in the 12\(^{th}\) century. Since Nagachandra followed the version of Vimalasurai, the Kannada rendering presents several differences. Rama was a dharma nayaka while Lakshmana who killed Ravana was a vira nayaka. Rama did not marry Sita after breaking the bow of Siva. She is described as Janaka’s own daughter. She had a twin brother by name Prabhamandala. A new episode of Narada’s desire for Sita is
included whereas the original episodes of Parasurama, Visvamitra and Manthara and absent. Since Bharata was jealous of Rama and Lakshmana and since he wanted to become the King, his mother Kaikeyi urged Dasaratha to order Rama to go to forests. No reference to Satubandhana (construction of a bridge across the sea to Lanka) is found. Sugriva, Hanuman and their followers were not at all monkeys. They were only human beings, who had the emblem of a monkey on their banners. The Kannada poet took liberties with certain names also. For example, Rama’s mother is mentioned as Aparajita and Satrughna’s mother as Suprabha.

There are some more Ramayanas. But Torave Ramayanar by Narahari (16th Century) is a popular one in Kannada. Though Narahari followed Valmiki, he too deviated from the original at a few places. It is said that the Fire God took away half the portion of Sita, before her abduction by Ravana. In order to be on constant watch, Lakshmana keeps awake and fasts throughout the exile period of fourteen years.

In Malayalam, Adhyatma Ramayanam by Ezuthacchan (16th Century) is the most popular one. He is known as the prince of Malayalam poets and his work a priceless possession of the Malayalam language and literature. ‘The practice which enjoins on the people the reading of Ezuthacchan’s Ramayana every day as a matter of obligatory religious duty still lingers in the nooks and corners of
Malabar, in spite of the temptations of critical thought. Though Ezuthacchan followed the Adhyayatma Ramayana in Sanskrit, he also drew inspiration from Valmiki. We find his characters Rama, Ravana and others noble and dignified. His description of Rama is nothing but an ideal representation. It is worthy of note that Ezuthacchan’s Ravana not only considers Sita a paragon of beauty but also the divine spouse of Rama. While urging Sita to accept his love, Ravana is said to have spoken in a double sense, the worldly and the Philosophical. In the worldly sense, Ravana requests Sita to accept his love on several grounds, one of which is Rama’s indifference to her. But in the philosophical sense, Ravana recognizes the greatness of Rama. His long appeal ends with the following lines:

‘O Essence of loveliness, lotus – faced beauty,
I am falling at your lotus feet
Save me, save me, for ever’

These lines too can be interpreted in double sense. If interpreted philosophically, they mean that Ravana has surrendered himself to Sita (Saranagati) and urged her to save him for ever.

While describing Sita’s marriage to Rama, Ezuthacchan remembers that it is a divine union. He however, ‘makes his Sita put the garland of glances on Rama before she puts on him the garland of marriage. True to the original, which is a sort of spiritualized version of the Ramayana in which Rama appears as God –
incarnate, Ezuttachan’s work also depicts Rama as an ideal for Gods and human beings as well. Such interesting details are found in almost all the language versions.

It is worthy of note that in almost all the major Indian language, the Ramayana appears to be a popular work. Kamba Ramayanam in Tamil, Ranganatha Ramayanam and Bhaskara Ramayanam in Telugu, Torave Ramayanam in Kannada, Adhytma Ramayanam in Malayalam, Krittivas Ramayana in Bengali, Bhavartha Ramayana in Marathi and Ramcharitamanas in Hindi are some of the popular Ramayana. Ramcharitmanas by Goswami Tulsidas is perhaps, the most popular work in Hind even to this day. The following passage from the Information Bulletin published by the UNESCO Regional centre for reading materials in South Asia bears an evidence to this fact:

The most popular writer continue to be Goswami Tulsidas, for his Ramacharit Manas. Requested to mention the book of their choice the readers have mostly mentioned the name of Ramacharit Manas.

It is also said of Tulasi’s Ramayan that it is appreciated even by the unlettered when sung in the form of Bhajan.

In this connection, it may also be mentioned that Valmiki is held in high esteem by the Telugu poets, ancient and modern. Several poets in their ‘Salutation to the poets’ (Kavistuti) had referred to Valmiki along with other masters of
poetry. Raghunatha Nayak of Tanjore who reigned from 1600-1631 wrote a poem on Valmiki entitled Valmiki Charitram.

The Tamil poet Kamban too had great regard for Valmiki. While describing the Kosala Country, he said that Valmiki had written the Ramayana in such a manner that it could be appreciated and enjoyed even by the celestial beings. As such, his (Kamban’s) attempt looked like the prattle of a dumb man under the influence of a drink. It is said that there was a Tamil poet by name Vanmikiyar who is said to have lived during the first Sangam. It is also believed that Valmiki lived for some time in a place called Tiruvanmiyur near Madras.

Thus the Ramayana of Valmiki has inspired several poets in the different languages of our country. It is also believed that Valmiki lived for some time in a place called Tiruvanmiyur near Madras.

Thus the Ramayana of Valmiki has inspired several poets in the different language of our country. It is worthy of note that the modern writers also draw inspiration from this adikavya though some of them have questioned a few details or episodes narrated in the poem. Perhaps, it is their critical outlook that has made them express those doubts. Even those who are not inclined to regard Rama as God-incarnate, also feel that Rama is a great hero. Further appears to be the first king in the history of our country who has travelled all the way from the north to
the south and made friendship with persons like Guha and the Vanarar belonging to the non-Aryna tribes. It may also be mentioned that Rama must have been responsible for the coinage of the happy phrase Asetu Himachalam, meaning ‘from the setu (the bridge constructed across the sea) to the Himalayas’. Thus the story of Rama has brought the Aryan and the non-Aryan tribes nearer and the country – both the south and the north – into one picture. Hence, the Ramayana may be called the national epic, the story being purely Indian and the character representing the highest ideals enshrined in the country’s ancient scriptures, namely the Vedas. Further, the different characters of the epic, whether historical personages or not, are remembered even to this day. Some of the characters like Rama, Sita and Hanuman are worshipped to this day. It is said that there is also a temple dedicated to Sita in Ceylon. The Ramayana, therefore, is not regarded as a piece of dead mythology, but as a living epic. As S.KJ.Belvalkar puts it, the Ramayana is a blending of history and some allegory. V.S.Srinivasa Sastri has aptly described the epic as ‘an essentially human document.'
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   Winterniz --- 3rd Century B.C.
   Macdonell --- About 7th century B.C.
   A.B.Keith --- A Little before 3rd Century B.C.


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CHAPTER – II

THE RAMAYANA IN TAMIL LITERATURE
Rama and the South

As already mentioned, the story of Rama has not only significantly contributed to the integration of the Aryan and the non-Aryan tribes but also imaginatively unified the northern and the southern parts of the country into one picture. It accelerated the process of assimilation of the Aryan and the non-Aryan or Dravidian customs. It is popularly believed that even before Rama’s time, the Aryan cults found their way to the South.\(^1\) Hanuman is said to have mastered Sanskrit and he was considered a great Sanskrit and it is called Hanuman Nalaka.

According to V.R.Ramachandra Dikshitar, the Vanaras had been Aryanised much sooner than the other tribes\(^2\).

As a result of the cultural assimilation, some of the Dravidian customs also spread to the north and the Dravidian Gods were recognized by the Aryans.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the story of Rama should find a permanent place in the South Indian language along with other Sanskrit Classics.

The contribution of the South Indian scholars in propagating the Valmiki Ramayana deserves special mention. There are many commentaries in Sanskrit on the Ramayan and most of the commentaries in Sanskrit on the Ramayana and most of the commentaries including the famous Govindaraja hail from the South.
It may be mentioned that the Southern Recension of the Valmiki Ramayana is generally regarded as an authentic version of the poem, as the original form is preserved in it.

The fact that the story of the Ramayana has been popular in the Tamil country can be proved from the several proverbs current among the people. These proverbs born out of long experience, not only reflect the people’s mind but also preserve some of the interesting episodes of the Ramayana. A few of them are given below.

1. **Vallavanukku-p-pullum ayutam**

   This suggests the kakanara episode wherein Rama threw a blade of grass and subdued the evil-minded Jayanta, the son of Indra, who approached Sita in the form of a crow. It went as a sharp shaft and chased him.

2. **Vadakke Pona Kuranku Varavillai**

   Monkeys were sent to the four directions to find out the whereabouts of Sita. It is only Hanuman, who went to the southern direction that returned and reported to Rama the happy news that Sita was found in Lanka.

3. **Vidiya Vidiya Ramayanam Kettu Ramanukku Sitai enna Akavenum Ennu Kettanam**

   There is a similar proverbs in Telugu also. Since Sita has been described in the Jain Ramayana as both sister and wife of Rama, some one may has asked this
question, perhaps, to express his doubt as to the correctness of the different versions of the story.

4. Kurivikketra Ramacaram

This too, perhaps, refers to the kakasura episode.

5. Cittukkurivikku Ramabanama

There is a similar proverb in Telugu: Pitchuka mida Brahmastrama?

This also refers to the kakasura episode and this proverb is generally used to denote that a big assault has been made on a small thing.

**Story of Rama and the Sangam Age**

It appears that a few stories based on the story of the Ramayana were prevalent in the Tamil country even during the Sangam age. According to the tradition and scholars, Sangam age is the earliest period in the literary history of Tamil. The traditional account mentions the formation of three Sangams or Academies at the three capitals of the Pandyas, namely, Madurai, which was swallowed by the sea, Kapatapuram and the modern Madurai respectively.

Though, the truth of this legendary account has been questioned, it is said that it may represent the ideal of literary academy presiding over the development of the language, at a later time there may have been a nostalgic feeling of a golden era of the past. Whatever the different theories may be regarding the data of the
Sangam age, it is suggested that it may be assigned to the first three centuries of the Christian era\(^7\).

Among the Sangam works, Akanmuru, Puranamuru and others deserve special mention. In one of the verses in Akanamuru, it is stated that when Rama, sitting under a banyan tree in Dhanushkoti was discussing with his followers the attack on Ravana, the birds on the tree made such a huge noise that it interrupted the deliberations. Then Rama had to silence them\(^8\). This, perhaps, suggests that every one including the sub-human species stood on the side of Rama and tried to help him.

Purananuru has an interesting verse describing the joy of the monkeys who were jewels dropped by Sita from the air when she was being carried away by Ravana\(^9\).

In one of the verses in Kalittokai, the story of Ravana with ‘needs double of five’ lifting the Himalaya, the abode of Siva and Uma and as a result getting crushed under that mighty mountain is told. Paripatal has a verse describing the episode of Ahalya. Indra is described as a pusai, meaning cat, because of his disguise as a cat. Thus it supports the traditional story of Ahalya as current in the Tamil Country\(^10\).

It is also believed that a Ramayana must have been in vogue in the Sangam age itself, but it is not extent now\(^11\).
This corroborates the view, nevertheless, that the story of Rama was very popular among the Tamils even in the Sangam age.

According to S.Vaiyapuri Pillai, a few Ramayanas ‘might have existed in Tamil long before Kamban wrote his immortal work. The reasons he has given are:

1. The commentary on Yapparunkalam mentions one Ramayana composed in venba metre.
2. Nacchinarkkiniyar in his commentary on Tolkappiyam mentions one verse taken from a Ramayana.
3. Four verses describing the story of Rama belonging to Asiriyamalai have been given in Purattirattu.

It is generally held that the earliest Ramayana was probably composed in the Venba metre and that it may be assigned to 650 A.D. Mu.Raghava Iyengar is of the view that the Ramayana was also called Ciramakatai (the story of Sri Rama) in olden days and that a Ramayana, perhaps, written in the venba metre like that of Perundevanar’s Bharatam, may have existed long before Kamban.

It is worth mentioning that several places, sacred hills and tanks in the Tamil land appear to have an interesting mnemomic connection with Rama or the story of Ramayana. The sthla puranas (legendary accounts of the holy shrines) also contain stories connected with Rama and other characters of the Ramayana.
Story of Rama in later works

The well known twin classics - Cilappatikaram (the story of be anklet) and Manimekalai also contain a few references to the Ramayana Story. The Cilappatikaram says that after Kovlan’s departure from the city of Pukar, the city resembles Ayodhya without Rama\textsuperscript{16}.

Kovalan with his devoted wife Kannaki reaches the outskirts of the city of Madurai. Before he sets forth to the city, he requests his guide and philosopher Kavunti Adigal (a Jain Nun) to look after his wife till he returns. Then Kavunti Adigal, consoles him by saying that Rama and Nala, in the past, had suffered separation from their wives\textsuperscript{17}. Rama, referred to as the lord of the Vedas, is also described as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu\textsuperscript{18}.

In Manimekalai, there is a reference to the story of the monkeys who threw big mountains into the sea and thus helped Rama in the construction of the causeway (setu) across the sea\textsuperscript{19}. It is generally said that this selu was constructed at the modern Dhanushkoti. But Mu.Raghava Iyengar is of the view that it meant Kanayakumari. Commenting on Cittalai Cattanar’s (author of Manimekalai) observation ‘Kuranku Ceykadar Kumariyam Perunturai’, Raghava Iyengar writes that Kanyakumari was the starting point of the Rama’s setu. According to him, it is called adi setu (first setu) while Dhanushkoti is Madhya setu (second setu). It obvious from Cilappatikaram and other Tamil works that Kumari was regarded as
a holy place where several people from different parts of the country flocked together and took bath in the holy waters of the sea in the belief that their sins would be eradicated. It is only in later times that Dhanushkoti came into prominence. The Tamil equivalent for the Sanskrit phrase Asetuhimachalam is Kumari mutal Imayam varai and this also supports the fact that the setu meant Kumari. Thus the above reference, connected with the Ramayana story, is of worthy consideration.

It is interesting to note that some of the above mentioned stories, which are not found in Valmiki’s work, are told in the form of similes which show that the story of Rama was popular among the Tamils, though a complete version of it was not available till the time of Kamban. However, Tamil scholars feel that the Ramayana was not so popular as the Mahabharata in the Sangam age; out the position appears to have completely changed as years passed by and especially after Kamba Ramayanam came to light, since Kamban and his work have always been held in high esteem by one and all.

Jain Ramayana

The contribution of the Jain scholars to the Tamil language and literature is noteworthy. Among the several Jain works, Cilappatikaram and Jivakachintamani deserve special mention. It is generally said that Kamban was much influenced by the later work. M.S.Poornalingam Pillai has observed. ‘There is a tradition that
Kamban’s Ramayana owes much of its excellence and many of its beauties to this memorable epic.

It appears that there must have existed in Tamil a Jain version of the Ramayana. But unfortunately, it has not been preserved. Sripuram, a later work dealing with the lives of the sixty-three great men of the Jain mythology contains an account of Rama in the story of Muniswaraswamy, the twentieth Tirthankara. The author has quoted in the story a few verses describing the sorrow of Sita. Since the style of these verses belong to a Ramayana, probably of the Jain Ramayana, which is not available now. The story as found in the Jain version of the Ramayana in Tamil is outlined below:

Dasaratha, King of Kasi in the beginning and later of Ayodhya, had four children – Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satruhn. Janaka, the King of Videha, requested Dasaratha to send Rama to the Yaga to be performed by him. Dassaratha complied with his wish. Rama married Sita there. Afterwards, Dasaratha made the young couple to stay at Kasi.

One day, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita went to Chitrakuta to enjoy the forest life. Then the sage Naranda happened to visit them. But Rama was not aware of the visit of the sage and hence he could not pay his due respect to him. Enraged by this lapse of Rama, Narada went to Ravana and apprised him of the ravishing
beauty of Sita. After hearing the sage, Ravana became very much enamoured of Sita. Accompanied by Maricha, he went to Chitrakuta and carried away Sita.

Dasaratha, who was then in Ayodhya, came to know of abduction of Sita and at once sent some messengers to console Rama. Kausalya, Bharata, Sagriva, Anumahan (Hanumanta) and other Vidyadharas also visited Rama.

Later, Anumahan found out the whereabouts of Sita and reported to Rama. Afterwards, he was sent to the city of Ravana as Rama’s messenger.

Meanswhile, Vali expressed his desire to join the company of Rama; but the later did not grant his request. A quarrel took place between Vali and Sugriva, in which the former was killed by Lakshmana. Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, also joined Rama.

In the great war that took place between Ravana and other Vidyadhara and Rama, Lakshmana killed Ravana and his followers. Afterwards, Rama took diksha and finally attained moksha (salvation). Anumahan and others also took diksha. But Lakshmana alone went to hell (Naraka).

**Story of Rama and the Alvars**

By the time of Alvars, the Vaishnava saints, began to sing their devotional and soul-filling hymns in praise of Lord Vishnu, Rama the ideal man of Valmiki, came to be regarded as the very incarnation of Vishnu. Thus the Ramayana, essentially a poem, became a religious work also.
Though the Alvars were very much captivated by the various episodes describing the descent of Krishna (Krishnavatara) they had also great reverence for Rama and the stories related to him. Some of the Alvars have sung the Ramayana episodes.

Periyalvar who is popularly known as Vishnuchitta in Telugu literature has sung an interesting song (ten verses) in which he mentions a few personal episodes which could have been known only to Rama and Sita. One of the episodes refers to the kakasura (wicked crow). Another episode is that Sita adorns her husband with a garland of Jasmines. Hanuman narrates these to Sita to convince her that he is the messenger of Rama.

Another Saint, Kulasekhara, a royal poet, has also sung certain episodes. To him, Rama and his story appear to be very dear. He has sung a beautiful lullaby in ten verses, extolling the various deeds to Rama. He has also described in ten verses the deep sorrow of Dasaratha after Rama’s exile to the forests. Dasaratha desires to have Rama as his son in all the seven birth. He says he would also leave the city for hevean just like Rama had left the city for the forests. Kulasekhara also describes some of the episodes of the Ramayana which may be regarded as a concise Ramayana.

Tondaradipodi Alvar alias Vipranarayan, in one of his songs, refers to an interesting episode of a squirrel that helped Rama in the construction of the Setu
Though this incident is not found in Valmiki’s work, this has been narrated in Ranganatha Ramayanam in Telugu.

Tirumangai Alwar, another important said-poet, has extolled the greatness of Rama, namely, his universal love. He is said to have addressed Guha as his brother and referred to Sita and Lakshmana as the sister-in-law and younger brother of Guha. According to T.P. Meenakshisundaram this message has become the very heart to Kamban’s epic.

Periavacchanpillai, a devout Vaishnava teacher who lived in about 12th century, had compiled a Ramayana entitled Pacurappadi Ramayanam. Though this is a small work, still it is significant for one reason namely, that the author being an adept in the Nalayira Divaiyap Prapatntam had woven this work using the very same pharases as found in the Pirapantam.

It is a fact that Kamban drew much inspiration from the songs of these Alvars elaborated in his poem some of the above episodes. But it may also be said that the Kamba Ramayanam, to-day, has almost eclipsed all other works in Tamil dealing with the story of Rama.

**Story of Rama in the Tevaram**

It is interesting to note that the Saiva Poets (Nayanmars) also derived inspiration from the Ramayana story. We find in the Tevaram, a collection of devotional hymns sung by the Saiva poets, references to the characters of the
Ramayana, namely Ravana and Rama. Tirujnanasambandar refers to the attempt of Ravana of lift the Himalaya and his defeat at the hands of Siva and other details. Tirunavukkarasar also refers to some of the deeds of Ravana.

Kamba Ramayanam (KR)

Kamban who is known as Kavichakravarti (Emperor among poets) is acclaimed as the greatest epic poet in Tamil. Though he has a few other works to his credit, his name and fame mainly rest on his immoral work, the Ramayana. It is perhaps, the only Tamil poem which is known better in other languages outside the Tamil land for a long time. It is said that a Kannada inscription of the fourteenth century refers to the Kamba Ramayanam. It is also popular in Kerala from very early times. According to a legendary story, Lord Siva was born as Kamban who wrote the Kamba Ramayanam consisting of thirty-two dramas that could be enacted. This is used for pavakuttu in the temples of Siva. The details regarding pavakuttu given by Chelnat Achyuta Menon are worth quoting here:

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This is kind of shadow-play conducted by two men who exhibit shadow-characters on the screen and speak for them. The performance is regarded as sacred by the masses who attend it in the same spirit of devotion as they visit followed by the conductors, who very often deviate into learned discussions on philosophical and literary subjects in the form of a dialogue. This is often done in a competitive spirit.
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Though Kamba Ramayanam is not as popular in the Telugu region as in the Kerala and Kannada regions, a proverb based on it is current among the Telugu speakers in the Chittur district. The proverb is Emira, Kambarayananam Matladuchunavu which means, ‘What are you speaking Kamba Ramayanam?’

However, recently, Kamba Ramayanam has been translated into Telugu; and a few writings on Kamban’s life and work are also available in Telugu.

There is a story that Kamban visited the court of Rudra Deva I, the Kakatiya king of Warangal and recited a venba (verse) on him. While eulogizing the King, Kamban said in that verse that plantain leaves because scarce in his country (Warangal) since the whole world had been his guests. Even though the expression is rather hyperbolic, it contains some truth, Besides praising the hospitality ands greatness of Rudra Deva, Kamban indirectly complained that plantain leaves were not abundant in Warangal, which is a fact. Thus Kamban appears to be a ‘master in combining truth with beauty’.

Mu.Raghava Iyengar and S.Vaiyapuri Pillai are of the opinion that the above incident might have taken place, while Somasundara Desikar expressed his doubt as to its correctness.

Kamban appears to be the first Tamil poet to employ, in his work, a few Telugu words. For example, Tammi (lotus), akkata (alas) are definitely Telugu forms. Further, from his description of the Godavari, he seems to have seen the
river. He uses the term Kidanta Godwavari which suggests that the river is overflowing with water. He may have used the term kidanta which is generally used to denote the vastness of a thing. According to T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, Kamban seems to have toured the country from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas\(^9\).

It can be seen from the above that Kamban was acquainted with the Telugu region and its language as well. As he was not patronized by the then Chola King, it is possible, he might have approached the Kakatiya ruler for some help. There is also a proverb in Tamil Nan Kakattiyan, Pokkattiyan alla meaning ‘I am a Kakatiya, I am not helpless”\(^{40}\). This also suggests that some sort of relationship must have existed between the Kakatiyas and the Tamils.

Kamban is said to be a contemporary of Kulottunga Chola III who was also known as Tyagavinodan\(^{41}\). The Chola king of Nellore, Tikka I (contemporary of Kulottunga) was loyal to the Chola Imperial House and bears the title Chola Sthapana charya. Tikka I appears to be a friend of the Kakatiya ruler, Gapanati. It is likely that the Cholas through the Cholas of Nellore sought the help of the Kakatiya ruler in putting down the Pandyas who appear to be their common enemy. When there were political alliances between the Cholas and the Kakatiyas, it is likely that there were social contacts also. Hence it may be said that Kamban
might have visited some parts of the Telugu region and he being a great poet might have received honours from the Telugu rulers.

Kamban named his epic Ramavataram (the Descent of Rama). It is also called Ramakatai (the story of Rama) and Kambanatakam (Kamban’s drama). But the popular name is merely Ramayanan or Kamba Ramayanam.

In one of the prefartory verses, Kamban made it clear that three poets had written the Ramayana in Sanskrit, the levapatai (deva bhasha), and that he had followed Valmiki’s version.

He had a very high regard for Valmiki. Kamban said that his desire to compose the Ramayana was like that of a cat’s desire to drink the entire milk in the ocean of milk. This only shows his great virtue, namely, humility. But the truth is that Kamban’s Ramayana is regarded as a great work in Tamil literature and Kamban as the greatest among Tamil poets. There are a few Tamil scholars, who even consider Kamban’s work superior to that of Valmiki. According to V.V.S.Aiyar, ‘in the Ramayana of Kamban, the world possess an epic which can challenge comparison not merely with the Iliad and the Arnaid, the Paradise Lost and the Mahabharata but with its original itself, namely the Ramayana of Valmiki.

Though Kamban’s chief source is the work of Valmiki, it may be said that he did not translate the poem, but only recreated the story in his own way. This is
true with most of the old Ramayanas that appeared in several Indian languages. Hence we find in the various versions several deviations from the original. Such differences are found in Kamba Ramayananam also. Mu.Raghava Iyengar feels that they are not the creations of Kamban. The poet may have consulted other Ramayanas available in Sanskrit and Tamil. He, therefore, feels that the Ramayana written in Tamil before Kamban should also contain certain variations from Valmiki’s work. Another scholar has observed as follows: ‘Excepting deviations like this, we find Kambar adhering to the main incidents and following closely some of Valmiki’s stanzas.

**Date of Kamban**

Several interesting anecdotes have gathered round the life of Kamban. However, scholars are of the opinions that he was born to one Adittan in Tiruvaluntur in Tanjore Distirct and his paron was Chandyappan. He is said to have lived in the 9th in the 10th century A.D. The other view is that Kamban belonged to the time of Kulottunga Chola III, who had the title of Tyagavinodan, that is, during the latter half of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century.

It is generally believed that Kamban was not patronized the Chola King, though he was a great poet. It is also said that he had to face the wrath of the King and so it is probable that he might have visited other Kingdom including
Warangal. It is further stated that Kamban was killed by a certain King. Taking all these stories and legends into consideration, it may perhaps be said that the relationship between the poet and the Chola King was not smooth for some unknown reason and that he was patronized by people. It appears that during his own life-time, his Ramayana became popular. As a result, some additions and alterations may have been made in it. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar calls it a poem of interpolations. He has included in his edition of KR only 167 verses out of the 1,420 verses in Balakandam and 550 out of the 1,210 verses in Ayodhyakandam. According to him, the rest are later additions. It is reliably learnt that one Vellaimbalavana-t-Tampiran has included in KR some verses. KR in its present form contains 10,569 stanzas or 42,276 lines.

Kamban has composed the first six kandas. The seventh kanda, Uttarakanda, has been written by one Vanitatan. But there is a view that it was composed by the famous Ottakkuttar who is also known as Kavichakravarti.

After Kamban

Writing on Kamban’s epic, Mu.Raghava Iyengar states that after KR came to light, the Ramayanas written before him have been lost sight of. The position has not changed in the post-Kamban period alos.

Arunachala Kavi of the eighteenth century has ably dramatized the Ramayana in the form of Kirtanai (song) and his work is called Ramanataka-k-
kirtanai. This is a popular work since it is at once literary and musical. Saint-poet Ramalingar (19th Century) has sung in his Tiru Arutpa about the greatness of Rama’s name under the title Sriramanamai Tiruppatikam which consists of ten verses of four lines each.

Among the modern authors, Kottaiyur Subramanya Iyer has written a Ramayana in six Kanda in 9,379 verses of four line each. This is entitled Ramayan Venba (published in 1930). Madhurakavi Srinivasa Iyengar is also said to have written a Ramayana Venba; but this has not yet seen the light. In the post Kamban period, several minor works based on the Ramayana have been written and among them the following may be mentioned. Ramodantam by Cu.Kumarasami Pulvar, Ramasamiyam by Ramaswami Iyer, Ramayanat Tiruppikal by Rangasami Reddiar, Akalikai Venba by Vellakkal, Subramanya Mudaliar, Ilankaip Parani by Kanakaraja Iyer, Ramayanak Kirtanai by Vembu Ammal, Iramayanam by Muthusami Kavirayar and Sampurana Ramanatakam by Sivashanmugam Pillai.

Several abridged or full translations of Valmiki’s Ramayana and Kamban’s poem have appeared in prose. Pandit Natesa Sastri, C.R.Srinivasa Iyengar, TGate Seika Tatadhariyar and a host of others have rendered VR in prose, while the prose versions of KR have been brought out by Tirucchitrambala Desikar, N.C.Ramaswamy and others. V.S.Venkataramagavachariyar has translated in prose Kalidass’s Raghuvamsa.
The story of the Uttarakanda also has attracted the Tamil scholars. Tirucchitrambala Desikar, Ananta Kavirayar and a few others have written the Uttarkanda in prose.

Adhyatma Ramayana ands Ananda Ramayana also have been rendered into Tamil. In this connection, Virai Alavandar’s poem Jnana Vasistha Amala Ramayana in 2055 verses deserves special mention.

To sum up: the earlier Tamil version of the Ramayana appeared in the Sangam age itself and that the story of Rama became so popular that it is preserved in similes and proverbs. The Alvars and Kamban not only popularized the story of the Ramayana but also gave it permanent place in Tamil literature. The story has also attracted the modern poets and writers. Thus it can be seen from the above that the influence of the Ramayana on Tamil Literature has been very old and continuous.
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CHAPTER – III

THE RAMAYANA IN TELUGU LITERATURE
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Rama and the Telugu People

There is a proverb in Telugu which says: Vinte Bharatam vinali, tinte arelu tinali. If you want to hear, hear the Mahabharata; if you want to eat, eat garelu (round pan-cakes made of black gram).

The Mahabharatam commened by Nannaya in about 1030 A.D. is the first known literary work in Telugu.¹ Nannaya could complete only the first three cantos and the work was later completed by Tikkana² and Errana.³ These three poets form the famour Kavitraya, the poet-trio and this great work is at once an authority for usage, a piece of good poetry and a book of knowledge in Telugu. Even to this day, the Telugu Mahabharatam continues its hold on the minds of the writers as a book of authority. The late Tirupti Venkata kavulu have rightly observed that it is a Veda to the Telugu writers.⁴

Despite these facts, it may be mentioned that the story of Rama has not only attracted but also captured the hearts of the Telugu people and poets as well. It is not exaggeration to say that three is not a village worth its name in Andhra which does not have a Rama mandir (temple). Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao, one of the architects of modern Andhra, has observed that Rama is the favourite deity of the Andhras,⁵ Tyagaraja (1767-1847) the immortal composer, whose name is a
house-hold word in the world of Karnatic music, who sang the glory of Rama is several Kirtanas (songs) said, ‘Rama, who is there equal to you?’ Kankanti Paparaju, an outstanding poet of the 17th century said as follows: ‘A scholdar who is endowed with the power of distinguishing the good from the bad and has the gift of writing poetry should not attempt unholy stories discarding the holy tales of Rama. If he did so, then, what is the use of his wisdom? What is the use of his fascinating poetry?’

Another poet by name, Chekuri Siddaya, in his Sri Rama Karnamritam extolled the greatness of the Ramayana in the following words: Ramayana, the first poem, composed by Valmiki, dear to Parvati, contains the Vedanta meaning; equal to the Mandara, the Kalpa tree, it gives moksha (beatitude). If heard, even great sins will perish; if read, one will reach the place of Vishnu, Vaikuntha.

Besides celebrating every year the birthday of Rama, Srirama-navami, the custom of invoking His blessings every day while, giving bath to the children is prevalent in several Telugu homes. The female member of the family, usually the mother, towards the end of the bath, utters the saying: ‘let Sri Rama protect you; be blessed with hundred years of life.’ The bath is said to be completet only after this is uttered. Another custom that is in vogue is to sing the song beginning with Anandamaye anandamaye during marriage while the mangala sutra (tali) is being tied. This song contains a reference to the marriage of Sita to Rama. This is
usually played on the nagasaram and it is interesting to note that this is sung even in the marriages of the Tamils.

Story of Rama in proverbs

There are also a good number of proverbs and sayings in Telugu based on the story of the Ramayana. Some are given below:

1. Intiguttu Lankaku chetu
   (Telling one’s secrets has brought the downfall of Lanka).
   This criticismcs the act of Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, who disclosed to Rama the secrets pertaining to Ravana and his kingdom which finally brought the downfall of Lanka.

2. Sita putte, Lanka chede
   (Sita was born, Lanka was destroyed)
   This suggests the story (not found in Valmiki) that Sita was born in Lanka in a lotus pond and her birth was predicted as an omen for the destruction of Lanka.

3. Sita puttaka Lanka chetuke
   (Sita’s birth was for the destruction of Lanka)
   The fight between Rama and Ravana which brought the downfall of Lanka was due to the abduction of Sita by Ravana.
4. Katte, Kotte, Tecche

(Constructed, killed and brought)

These three words give the Ramayana in a nutshell. Katte refers to the construction of the bridge (Setu) on the sea; kotte means killing of Ravana; tecche refers to the bringing of Sita from Lanka.

5. Ramayanamanta vini, Ramuniki Sita emi kavalani adigadata

(After hearing the entire story of the Ramayana, someone asked, ‘what was Sita to Rama?’)

This is an interesting proverb. One need not hear the complete story to answer this question. This, perhaps, refers to the different versions of the Ramayana story, Sita being mentioned as the wife of Rama in one version and as sister in another. This proverb suggests the presence of the different versions of the story of Rama in the Telugu country.

6. Ramunivanti raju, Ravanunivanti vairi leru

(There is no king like Rama and no enemy like Ravana)

This confirms the Indian tradition that Rama was an ideal king. This, perhaps, condemns Ravana who fought even with the God-incarnate.

7. Ramunipadalu tagilite rallu remanulautavi

(Even stones will turn into sweet maids if the feet of Rama touch them.)

This definitely refers to the episode of Ahalya.
8. Ramabanam

(The arrow of Rama)

A very powerful shaft.

9. Sri (Si) Ramu sena

(The army of Sri Rama)

This refers to the monkeys who helped Rama.

This has been used by Peddana, a celebrated poet of the 16th century in his work Manu Charitra (4-16)

10. Uduta bhakti

(The devotion of a squirrel)

There is a story in some of the Telugu works on Rama to the effect that a squirrel also helped him, in its own humble way, in the construction, of the bridge across the sea.

This is often used by the Telugus whenever they want to express their admiration for the sincerity of action, however trivial it might be.

The presence of innumerable Rama mairis and of several works available, perhaps, in hundreds,9 glorifying the story of Rama, bear ample testimony to the poularity of Rama in the Telugu country and the Ramayana literature. The story, either complete or in parts, has been represented in every literary form kavya (poetical composition), dwipada, yakshugana (dance play), sataka (a century of
verses), dandaka, geya (song), samkirtana, chatu (stray verse), drama prose etc. In other words, the story of Rama has been narrated from the most dignified literary form, namely, kavya to the ordinary folk-song sung by the unlettered. This only shows that the Telugu mind is a stronghold of Rama cult and that the influence of the Ramayana on Telugu literature is powerful, old and continuous. An attempt is made here to trace briefly the development of Ramayana literature in Telugu.

For the sake of convenience, the Ramayanas in Telugu may be divided into three categories Purva Ramayanas (upto the coronation of Rama), Uttara Ramayanas (the later history) and Adhyatma Ramayanas.

Ranganatha Ramayanam (RR)

Among the available works, Ranganatha Ramayanam composed in the Dwipada metre may be considered as the earliest and complete Ramayana in Telugu. Some believe that it was written in about 1240. According to some scholars, the RR might have been composed during 1280-1300 or towards the end of the 14th century. It contains 17,290 dwipadas or 34,580 lines.

The authorship of its work is also open to doubt. According to the traditional belief, it was written by a poet called Ranganatha and hence the work came to be known as RR. Some of the authors on poetics like Appakavi (17th century) had quoted in their it was only RR. Further, a few poets like Anantamatya in their salutation to the old poets (kavistuti) mentioned the name
of Ranganatha along with the poets Nannaya, Tikkana, Errana, Bhaskara and others. It is obvious from this that there was a poet by name Ranganatha. Veturi Prabakara Sastri who ably edited the RR for the Andhra University had suggested that Chakrapani Ranganatha, a contemporary of Palkuriki Somanatha of the 12th or the 13th century, might be the same Ranganatha who assisted Gona Buddha Reddi in his work. According to him, several references to Vaishnavism are found in the RR and that they cannot be regarded as mere interpolations since they are found in almost the same manner in various manuscripts. It is also believed that Chakrapani Ranganatha was a Vaishnavite in the beginning, though he became a Saivite later.

The other theory is that RR was written by a royal poet called Gona or Kona Buddha Reddi at the instance of his father Panduranga Vitthalanatha and that he named it after his father, the abbreviated form of whose being Ranganatha; So named Ranganatha Ramayanam, though written by Gona Buddha Reddi. In the preface of this work, the author has been mentioned as merely Gona Buddha and king Vitthala as his father. Ranganatha’s name is not at all found. Further, there is no internal evidence to prove that the members of the Gona clan belong to the Reddi community; but it is ascertained from inscriptions that they are Reddis.
Whether Gona Buddha was the real author or not, he must have been a great scholar, an authority on the Ramayana as well as a great patron of poets. He has been mentioned as Kavikalpataru (kalpa tree for the poets) and Kaviloka Bhoja (the well-known Bhoja of the classical age who patronized several Sanskrit poets). So it is needless to say that he was the right person to write the story of Rama since he was a scholar who knew the intricacies of the Ramayana and a great scholar in the language.18

There has been a lot of discussion on the subject and much has been said on both sides.

Summarizing the above, it may perhaps be said that Gona Buddha Reddi might have written a Ramayana, as he was an adept in it, after the name of his father and that a poet by name Ranganatha might have assisted him to a considerable extent. Or perhaps, it was written jointly by them. Even though there is no evidence to prove this, legendary tales and the observations of the rhetoricians relating to Ranganatha should not be brushed aside on the ground that they are not authentic or not accurate. The legendary tales ascribe the authorship to Ranganatha and support the contemporaneity of Ranganatha and Gona Buddha. Whatever the authorship may be, RR is a popular work and that it is unique in itself for the following reasons.
First, it is written in the dwipada metre which can be set to music and it is the first and complete Ramayana composed in that metre. Some portions from it are sung during puppetry (tolubommalata). Thus, it is popular with the masses also. Second, it is composed in such a uniform and simple but dignified style that could be understood and appreciated by the average reader. Lastly, one can find in it several episodes or details which are not found in the VR as available in its present form but prevalent in the Telugu folk-lore. Though the author clearly mentioned that he would narrate the story as told by Valmiki, one can find in his work several deviations from the original. But we do not know the text he has followed. Since some of the stories described in the RR are not found in other language versions and since they are found in the Telugu folk songs also, it is presumed that those stories were current in the then Telugu country. Thus RR has made a bold attempt of assimilating the stories dear to the people at the same time being faithful to the original. In short, it may be called a work representing the classical (purana) and indigenous (desi) styles.

Bhaskara Ramayanam (BR)

The next work that is worth mentioning is Bhaskara Ramayanam. Though some scholars are of the view that this is the first Ramayana that appeared in Telugu, it may be said that BR and RR appear to be contemporary works. BR is
the first Ramayana written in the Kavya style. It is a long poem of six cantos interspersed with prose passages. It consists of 6,081 poems and prose passages.

As is evident from the name, this work is called after Bhaskara, one of the four authors. Bhaskara who is believed to have lived in the 13th century is definitely a master poet among them. He wrote only Aranya Kanda and a portion of the Yuddha Kanda. The other Kandas were completed by his son Mallikarjuna Bhattu, his disciple Kumararudra deva and his friend Ayyalarya. That is why the style is not uniform throughout. The critical consensus today is that the poetry of Bhasleara is sublime and dignified and that BR, on the whole, is a beautiful poem. It is held in high esteem by the scholars.

In the case of this work also, there has been a lot of discussion over the date and exact name of Bhaskara. Some, identified him as the famous mantra (minister) Bhaskara, the grand father of Tikkana, who lived in the 13th century. According to one school of thought, he is Hulakki or Halakki (tambula, a Kannada word) Bhaskara who lived in the 13th century. Hulakki Bhaskara was perhaps the court poet of the Kakatiya king Prataparudra deva II who reigned from 1296 to 1323. Further, there are some references in the BR to one Sahini Marana who is believed to have lived in the 13th century. On the basis of the available data, it is probable that the author of BR may be the same Hulakki Bhaskara, a great poet in his own right.
Errana Ramayanam

There was another Ramayanam also in the 14th century. This is by Errapregada better known as Errana, one of the poettrio. Perhaps, he was not satisfied with RR and BR, as they are not exact renderings of Valmiki. According to Potana, the author of the Telugu Mahabhagavatam, BR may be regarded as a condensed version of Ramayana. He said that Bhaskara had dealt with it rather loosely; otherwise he (Potana) would have made the work voluminous. In this connection, let me quote below the remarks made by one of the modern scholars.

‘The authors of Bhaskara Ramayanam no doubt laid the Telugu world under deep obligations, but their translation was after all an abridgement. Ranganatha’s transaction was not a literal translation either. They have both survived the period when they were considered adequate.’

Perhaps, Errana too might have thought on the same lines. Otherwise, there was no justification in his attempting the Ramayana story again, though he was a staunch devotee of Siva and was known as Sambhudas. It is, therefore, possible that Errana may have written a Ramayana with the sole object of doing full justice to the original. But, unfortunately this is believed to be lost though it was available till the time of Kuchimanchi Timma Kavi (about 1756), a poet-grammarian, who had quoted in his Sarvalakshanasara Sangrahamu nine stanzas from Errana Ramayanam. Veturi Prabhakara Sastri was able to trace a few more stanzas,
mostly from the Yuddhakanda, and published them.²⁴ But the authorship of some of these verses is doubted.²⁵

It is really unfortunate that this Ramayana has been lost and the Telugu literary world is thus deprived of a great work written by a great poet. The patron of the poet, Prolaya Vema Reddi, himself declared that he got name and fame by causing the poet Errana to write Ramakatha (the story of Rama).²⁶ Later poets like Jakkana (14th century)²⁷ and Chedaluvada Mallana (16th century) had referred to this Ramayana in their works. Mallana, in fact, made it clear that Errana wrote his Ramayana basing his story on that of Valmiki.²⁸

It is interesting to note that Errana who completed the Aranyaparva (Vanaparva) in the Mahabhartam in the name of Nannaya, had written the story of Rama there also.

Koravi Satyanarana alias Pina Bhimana (14th century) who was known as the ‘grandsire of Telugu poetry’ (Andhra Kavitapilamaha) is also said to have written a Ramayana in verse; but it is lost.²⁹ It appears that some more Ramayanas are lost, the reasons being unknown, and among them Viddikuchi Ramayanam, Sakalavarnanapurna Ramayanam by Chitrakavi Anantakavi may be mentioned.

Annamacharya Ramayanam

Tallapaka Annamacharya (1424-1503), the famour vaggeyakara (Composter of songs) and a devotee of Lord Venkateswara of Tirupati, had also
written a Ramayana in the Dwipada metre. Though this is not available, it is said that a portion of it is preserved in the Sarawati Mahal Library. Tanjore, in a manuscript (No.3335) entitled Ramakatha. This is also in the dwipada metre. But, unfortunately, the names of the poet and his patron are not mentioned in it. Moreover, it does not deal with the entire story, though called Ramakatha. It only gives the story of a dove which was protected by the king Sibi with whom the bird took refuge and this story occurs in the dialogue that took place between Rama and Sugriva. Though there is no evidence to show that this belongs to the Ramayana written by Annamacharya, it may be said that it might have been taken from some Ramayana, the authorship of which is not known.

Annamacharya, in one of his songs, has given the Ramayana story in a nutshell, as narrated below.

‘He is the parabrahma (Supreme God)
The story of Rama, extolled in hundred crores, is the essence of all punyas
Rama, born on earth, married the maid born of earth
Gave protection to all the dwellers of the forest
Disfigured that woman of evil intent
And put an end of Khara and Dushana.
He killed Vali and gave Sugriva the Kishkindha
Build a bridge and crossed it along with the monkeys
Killed Ravana, Kumbhakarna and other
And returned to Ayodhya with his wife.
Accompanied by the brothers
He ruled the earth
And had sons-Kusa and Lava
He who crowned Vibhishana as king of Lanka
Stays there on the Venkata hill.’

Since Annamacharya was a great musician, it is felt that his work must be pleasing to the ear and that he might have followed Valmiki.

The work of Katta Varadaraju, a royal poet, entitled Sri Ramayanam has been recently published. It consists of six kandas and 23,170 dwipalas, i.e. 46,340 lines. Thus KVR becomes the biggest dwipada work. It is also the first exact translation of the original. Still, one can find a few deviations from the original. Nidudavolu Venkata Rao, who has edited this work with the available single manuscript, has pointed out that some of passages of this Ramayana are also found in RR. He also feels that RR contains some dwipadas from the Ramayananam of Annamacharya. This only shows that all these Ramayanas, written in the dwipada metre, were popular and that some devotees of the Ramayana, out of their reverence for the story, may have prepared their own versions with the choicest passages from the available versions.
The Ramayanam of Bhosala Ekoji, a Maharashtrian by birth, has not yet been published. One Cheda Raghava Reddi also has written a Ramayana in the dwipada metre. It is lying as a manuscript.

Other Ramayanas

Besides the above complete Ramayanas, there are also a few abridged versions available in Telugu. Among them, Ramabhyudayam written by Ayyalaraju Ramabhadrudu (1510-1580) stands foremost. He was one of the famous ashtadiggajas (eight great poets) who flourished in the court of Sri Krishnadevaraya. His work, in eight cantos, is regarded as a piece of good literature. His skill in abridging the story to suit the requisites of a prabandha is praiseworthy.

Molla, a poetess belonging to the potter community and who is said to have lived in the middle of the 14th century, has written a Ramayana in six kandas.35 She was aware of the existing Ramayanas already written by the master poets. She was equally aware of her limitations too. Further, she was not a great scholar. Still she attempted the story of Rama in the firm belief that chanting his name would bring salvation. Despite a few errors of omission and commission, Molla Ramayanam is one of the widely read books in Telugu on account of its simple, clear and fascinating style.
Kuchimanchi Timma Kavi (1684-1757), a prolific writer, had written a Ramayana in atcha Telugu (pure Telugu) devoid of Sanskrit words and compounds. With a limited vocabulary, that he was able to produce a good poem is really praiseworthy.

Raghunatha Nayak of Tanjore, Anantaraju Jannaya, Mikkili Mallikarjunudu and a host of others had written Ramayanas. Besides these, there are also Satakantha Ramayanas, Adbhuta Ramayanas and Vichitra Ramayanas available in Telugu. In Satakantha Ramayana, Sita is said to have killed Satakantha, a great warrior and a brother of Ravana.\(^{36}\)

Poets like Pingali Surana went a step further by composing in one and the same work the two stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Such a work is called duyarthikavya, which means a literary composition giving two meanings. Pingali Surana was the first poet to write such a work in Telugu and its name is Raghava Pandaviyam. Happily it is also the best work. The other duyarthikavyas which describe the story of Rama are (1) Sivaramabhyudayam by Poduri Pedaramamatyam (2) Dharatmaja Parinayam by Krottalanka Mrityunjayudu (3) Sri Ramakrishnopakhyanam by Sripada Venkatahalam (pub. 1876) and (4) Achalatmaja Parinayam by Tirumala Bukkapatnam Venkatacharya (Pub. 1936).

As years clasped, there arose thryarthi (three meanings) and chaturarihi (four meanings) poems also. Of these, Raghava Yadava Pandaviyam by Nelluri
Viaraghava Kavi and Yadava Raghava Pandaviyam by Yelakuchi: Balasaraswati deserve mention. Though it is generally said of these works that they were merely acrobatic feats of the poets, still it may be pointed out that these works require a mastery over Sanskrit and Telugu.

During the time of the Nayak kings of Tanjore and Madhura, prose received its due recognition and patronage and as a result of this, several prose writings came to light. Tupakula Anantabhupala, Syamaraya Kavi, Singaraju Dattatreyulu and a few others had written the Ramayana story in prose.

As we have seen, there are several Ramayanas in Telugu from the 13th century onwards. Almost all the authors followed Valmiki; but it should be noted that none of them except Katta Varadaraju made a sincere attempt to translate the original verbatim. In fact, it was not the aim of the old Telugu poets to translate the Sanskrit epics including the Ramayana as they are. Even the Mahabharatam of the poet-trio is not a true copy in translation of the original; it is not a word for word or sloka for sloka translation. At some places, the original was closely followed, while at some others additions were made. It is only in modern times, some scholars tried to bring out faithful translations of the Sanskrit originals.

Faithful renderings of VR

Gopinatham Venkata Kavi (1820-1890) closely followed the VR and translation it into chaste verse. His rendering in six kandas was published in 1887.
This is also a popular Ramayana. Another work entitled *yathaslokatalparya Ramayanam* by Kanadam Peddana Somayaji and others\(^3\) came to light in 1895. Peddana Somayaji had also translated the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Later, Vavilikolanu Subba Row (1863-1939), Janamanchi Seshadri Sarma (1882-1950), Sripada Krishnamurti Sastri (1866-1960) and a few others have published their exact renderings. The translation of Vavilikolanu Subba Row entitled *Srimat Andhra Valmiki Ramyanam*, published in 1909 in two volumes has been acclaimed as a good rendering. It was printed four times even in his life time and he was called Andhra Valmiki.\(^3\)\(^8\) He had also written and published a valuable commentary to it called *Mandharam*.

Satakas

It will not be out of place here to mention some of the satakas (century of verses) extolling the greatness of Rama. One of the requisites of a sataka is to have a makuta (refrain) which will be repeated in every stanza is to have a makuta (refrain) which will be repeated in every stanza in its last line. There are a good number of salakas in Telugu with the makuta addressed to Rama in different names like Sitapati, Dasarathi, Prasanna Raghava, Ramaprabhy etc.\(^3\)\(^9\) Most of these satakas describe either the various aspects of the Ramayana story or the noble qualities of Rama. In some sataka like *Prasanna Raghava Satakam* by Vanguru Mudu Narasa Kavi, the story of Rama has been narrated briefly. This
work contains two hundred verses. In one of them, the birth of Sita has been narrated. She is said to have taken birth in Lanka. Ravana kept her in a box and and put it in the sea. Bhudevi (the mother Earth) noticed the box and kept it with herself for a few days. Finally, Sita was traced by the king Janaka in the furrow of the plough.

Dasarathi Satakam of Bhadrachalam Ramadas (Kancharla Gopanna) is a soul-filling work. He was a great devotee of Rama and his devotion can be found in every word of the work. The refrain of this satakam is Dasarathi Karunapayonidhi, meaning ‘O! Son of Dasaratha, the ocean of compassion.’ This and other satakas are so popular that they are recited even to this day with great reverence.

In this connection, mention may be made of the songs of Tyagaraja, another great devotee of Rama. The varied qualities of Rama and the different episodes of the Ramayana story have been described in his exquisitely beautiful songs. Tyagaraja, more than any other Telugu poet, had done yeoman service in spreading the Rama cult not only among the Telugus but also in the different parts of South India. In the words of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, ‘he brings Rama before our eyes as he steps forward with his waving hair to bend the bow of Siva or when he aims an arrow at Marica to subdue his pride….. Tyagaraja, speaks of Rama as an integrated person.'
Of the several Yakshaganas (operas) dealing with the Ramayana story, Sugriva Vijayam written by Kandukuri Rudra Kavi of the 16th century is an inspiring work. Though the validity of Rama’s killing Vali has been questioned by some poets, Rudra Kavi supports the stand taken by Rama. But the remarks of Tara appear to be more shrewd and powerful than the arrows of Rama. She asks: O! Rama, why should you kill Vali unnecessarily when the abductor of your wife was alive? Where has gone this adventurous spirit when Bharata took your kindom? Why should you break the law? Has your wisdom and statesmanship also been abducted along with Janaki?42

Interestingly enough, some modern writers of our own times have also been greatly inspired by the story of Rama. Several interesting and critical articles dealing with the various aspects of the Ramayana are being published in journals. Apart from these writings, a good number of minor poems (Khanda Kavyas) describing the various episodes or characters are also available. Such well-known poets as Sripada Krishnamurti Sastri; Viswanatha Satyanaranyana (Srimadramayana Kalpavriksham), Manikonda Satyanarayana Sastri (Manikonda Ramayanam), Manikonda Satyanarayana Sastri (Manikonda Ramayanam), Challa Lakshminarayana Sastri (Mythili) and a few others have written the complete Ramayana in verse while Sripada Subrahmanyam Sastri, Srinivasa Siromani and a host of others have translated the VR into the spoken idiom. Dodla Venkata Rama
Reddi has published his Ramayana (Dodda Ramayanam) in two volumes in classical prose (pub. In 1955).

It may also mentioned that the Telugu poets have translated Ramayanas from other Indian languages like Tamil, Hindi and Oriya. Thus, one can find in Telugu the Ramayana literature rich and varied.

Uttara Ramayana

The Uttara Ramayana or the Uttara kanda deals with the later history of Rama. That is to say, the story from his coronation to niryana (death) is dealt with in detail in the Uttara kanda.

Tikkana, one of the poet-trio (about 1260) and one of the greatest poets that the language has produced was the first Telugu poet to write the Uttara Ramayana. His work entitled Nirvachanottara Ramayanam is written in ten cantos containing 1,260 verses while the original is a work of about 4,000 slokas. Tikkana comes from a great family of scholars and ministers. His grand father was mantra Bhaskara whose name, as already mentioned, is associated with the authorship of BR. If this is true, there is every justification in Tikkana’s writing the Uttara Ramayana so that he could complete the work left over by his grandfather. Tikkana, in the prefatory verses, referred to several things but did not mention any reason why he should write the Uttara kanda only leaving the purva Ramayana. However, he made an observation in a humble tone that his work might be read at
least for the sake of his grand father. This gives some room for the guess that Mantri Bhaskara had already written the purva Ramayana, that is, BR and hence Tikana had taken up the later, perhaps, with the object of completing the story. But Pingali Lakshmikantam is of the opinion that the RR of Gona Buddha Reddi (six cantos) must have been available by Tikana’s time and hence he took up the later story. Whatever the reason might be, it is unfortunate that Tikana, a master poet, did not write the purva Ramayana.

Tikkana’s work appears to be more or less an independent poem in spite of the availability of the Sanskrit original. Some of the significant differences are: the story is given in a nutshell at the beginning and there is no description of the death of Rama unlike the original. Further, Tikkana’s Rama appears to be an ideal man and a wise ruler. The dialogue between Rambha and Ravana, the passages relating to the repudiation of Sita, the wanderings of Sita and Rama in the pleasure garden are so superb in his work that they can be treated as minor kavyas.

Jayanti Ramabhattu, a later poet, completed in one canto the story that was left over by Tikana towards the end.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that Nannaya, the first among the poet-trio, is also said to have written a Ramayana under the title Raghavabhyudayam. Even though there is no supporting evidence to this, it is
interesting to note that all the three poets of the ‘trio’ have attempted the story of Rama.

The next work that deserves mention is that of Kankanti Paparaju who probably lived in the 17th century. He was faithful to the original and translated all the stories left over by Tikkana. His descriptions are elaborate and beautiful, the style being dignified. As his poem contains about 3,000 poetry and prose passages, it is generally considered as an elaborate work while that of Tikkana a concise poem.

Gona Kachabhupati and Vitthalaraju, the sons of Buddha Reddi, have written the Uttara Ramayana in the dwipada meter, as desired by their father, and thus they completed the RR. This was perhaps, composed in the period between 1320 and 1325.

Adhyatma Ramayana (AR)

Adhyatma Ramayana is generally believed to be a part of Brahmanda Purana. This has been questioned by modern research scholars like Chelnat Achyuta Menon. His opinion is as follows: “Either Adhyatman had an independent existence, or the compiler of Brahmandam has incorporated it in the bigger purana for reasons for his own.”45 The authorship of AR too is doubted. According to some, it is the work of viswamitra.46 Some would ascribe it to Vyasa.
AR is also popular in the Telugu country; but not as much as VR. It is said that one Kancherla Sarabhana of the 16th century translated the AR into Telugu.\textsuperscript{47} Since this is not extant now, we are not in a position to assess its quality. However, it may be pointed out from the account given below that AR was very popular in the Telugu country in the 16th century.

While discussing the genesis of the AR in Malayalam, Achyuta Menon says as follows: ‘Once a Brahmana Sanyasin presented a manuscript copy of the original Adhyatma written in Telugu (according to another version, Nagari) script to an Ampalappuza Raja, who wished to have it translated into Malayalam script so that he might read the rare work. Meppattur Bhattatiri, who happened to be at the palace at the time, was asked by the Raja to do the transcription or arrange for it. Since Meppattur did not know Telugu, Ezuttaccan was approached for the purpose, as he was conversant with all Dravidian scripts. In the course of transcription, the work was rendered into Malayalam verse by the poet.’\textsuperscript{48} It is believed that the Sanyasin had brought the manuscript from Banares.

If the above account can be considered true, there is every reason to believe that AR was a popular work in the Telugu country also.

Among the available Telugu translations, the rendering of Kanada Peddana Somayaji (18th century) seems to be the earliest. But it now appears that it was
translated already by Parasuramapantula Lingamurti and Rapaka Sri Rama Kavi before Peddana Somayaji, but these translations have not been printed yet.⁴⁹

Later, Kotamaraju Nagayamatya (about 1860) and Mamidanna Subhadramma, a poetess, had translated into verse and dwipada and these have been published in 1924 and 1911 respectively. Kalahastri Subrahmanya Kavi had rendered this in six cantos in the form of kirtanas (songs) and this translation was published in 1911. These songs are widely sung and highly appreciated. There are a few more translations in prose an verse.

Vasishtha Ramayana too has been rendered into Telugu by Madiki Singana (1⁴th century), Tarigonda Vengamamba, a poetess and Madduri Sambayya respectively.

Ananda Ramayana

Ananda Ramayana, which is supposed to be a work of Valmiki, also has attracted the attention of the Telugu poets. It is said that two renderings in verse have appeared. Chilukuri Srirama Sastri ascribes the authorship not to Valmiki but to msamartha Ramadasa, the well-known saint-poet of Maharashtra.⁵⁰ According to him, Valmiki is not at all the author of the Ananda Ramayanam and this appears to be true since it presents several deviations from the Ramayana of valmiki. Moreover, one and the same author, namely, Valmiki could not have given two different versions of the same story.
The above Telugu version is a faithful rendering of the Ananda Ramayana by Samartha Ramadasa and it contains four Kandas. They are as follows:

(1) Sara Kanda (2) Yatra kanda (3) Yaga Kanda and (4) Vilasa Kanda. In turn, these have been divided into several sargas (chapters). It is significant to note that the Sara kanda contains the entire story of the Ramayana and the remaining kandas highlight the greatness of Rama and his pilgrimage to several holy places.

Some of the deviations as found in this work are not only interesting but also worth considering.

In the Ananda Ramayana, Hanuman was born from one of the portions of the divine food (payasa). As the story goes on, Dasaratha gave the divine food to his three queens in equal proportions. But Kaikeyi thought that this action of her husband was an insult to her and therefore threw away her portion. It was found and collected by a Gandharva lady who left it on the mountain Anjana. Later, it was taken by Anjani devi and Hanuman was born to her. Thus the story of the birth of Hanuman is narrated.

Another deviation worth mentioning is about the characterization of Sita. In Valmiki’s Ramayana, Sita uses harsh words against Lakshmana when he hesitates to obey her order that he should go to the rescue of Rama from the fake deer (Maricha) who cried Oh Sita! And Oh Lakshmana! At this particular juncture, she appears from her talk to be an ordinary woman who loses her temper when her
wishes are not carried out. But the Ananda Ramayana gives a different version about Sita in this connection.

According to the above, Rama and Sita have a dialogue, in camera, before the actual incident takes place. Rama then suggests to her that Sita, the satvaguna (the quality of excellence) woman may take shelter in him and the rajogura (the quality of passion) Sita may enter fire. This the tamasaguna (the quality of darkness) Sita has been left over and it is she that uses the harsh languages against Lakshmana. After the death of Ravana, Sita enters the fire not to satisfy Rama but to get back all the three gunas. This variation paints Sita in brighter colours.

It also states that Rama along with Sita reigns for eleven thousand years. He has several sons and grand-sons and he finally reaches the Vaikuntha. Among the several deviations that are found in this Ramayana, the following also deserve mention. Dasaratha has 700 wives; Ravana tries his best to foil the marriage of Kausalya to Dasaratha; Ravana is one of the suitors to marry Sita and he is put to shame in the marriage (suayamvara) hall; after reaching Ayodhya, Rama participates in the Dipavali festival; Rama gives back life to Bharata and Satrughna with the help of Sanjeevani, a medical herb; the importance of Sri Vishnu Vrata is explained; Rama preaches philosophy to Dasaratha in the presence of Kausalya; a meeting of Siva, Agastya and Rama takes places; Rama in
the guise of a sage subdues the pride of Hanuman; Nala constructs the Setu by chanting the holy name of Rama.

In conclusion, it may be said that several Ramayanas have appeared in Telugu and that the influence of the Ramayana on Telugu literature is very old and unbroken. In common with other language poets, the Telugu poets also have regarded Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu.
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1. Telugu Culture, 1959, p.65.

2. Tikkana, Who Lived in the latter half of the 13th Century, Completed Fifteen centre.

3. Errana is also known as Erraparada, He lived in the latter half of the 14th century.


5. Andra Vagmaya Chatra, p.32.

6. Uttara Ramayana, (Madras Rayalu & Co.,), p.3.

7. Sriram Raksha,


10. RR has been published by Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma, p.1958.


18. RR, Rayalu & Co., p.4.
20. B.R. was first edited and published by Karalapati Rangayya.
22. Sishta Ramakrishna Sastri in his Andhra Vangmaya Chartra Sarvanam, p.607.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
30. This has been published in 4 volumes,
32. There are different theories about her date. Some believe that the might have lived in the 15th century.

34. Balakanda-Peddana Somayaji.


37. Tyhagaraja is said to have composed 24,000, but about a thousand are available now.

38. Forward to the spiritural of Tyagaraja pp.3-4.

39. Sugriva Vijayam, p.36.


41. Ibid., p.129.

42. Ibid., 164.


44. Ezullaccan and His Age, p.103.

45. Ibid., p.103.


47. Ezullaccan and his Age, pp.103-104.


49. Ibid.

50. I could not only the translation done by Chilukuri Srirama Sastri This has been published in 1956 by Ananda Ramayanam Karyalayam, Kanki Padu.
CHAPTER – IV
THE RAMAYANA IN FOLK SONGS
CHAPTER – IV
THE RAMAYANA IN FOLK SONGS

The Story of Rama and the Folk Authors

Historically speaking, the folk authors too have been greatly inspired by the story of Rama. The result is that we have in Telugu and Tamil, as in other language, several inspiring folk-songs describing the Ramayana story either in full or in parts. But, it is very difficult to determine their date and authorship as the folk-authors have generally remained anonymous in their compositions. Further, several people may have worked at in the process of transmission from one generation of singers to another and often while communicating them among themselves. As F.J.Child remarks: ‘A genuinely popular ballad can have no fixed and final form, no sole authentic version. There are texts but there is no text\(^1\). It is also said that ‘a folk-song is neither new nor old, because it is continually taking on new life; it is an individual flowering on a common stem\(^2\). However, it may be pointed out that some of these folk-songs must be very old, though they might have lost their original forms or had their forms distorted. When we find textual difference in our old works written by scholars, it is natural that the folk-songs, not written and not preserved carefully, may have undergone several changes.

Palkuriki Somanatha\(^3\) a celebrated Telugu poet of the 12\(^{th}\) or 13\(^{th}\) century, had referred in his Panditaradhya Charita to several types of songs, some of which
are now known only by their names. Regarding the source of one of his important works, Basavapuram, he said that he had drawn inspiration from the old songs sung by the devotees. So, it is obvious from this that Somanatha, a devout student of the desi (indigenous) literature to which the songs and ballads belong, was not only inspired by the old songs but also instrumental in giving them a literary status.

Although the folk-literature has been pedantically neglected in the past, it has always received due recognition and patronage from the masses, generally illiterate and unsophisticated. In fact, folk-literature is still inspiring alive in the rural parts of the country in as much as it represents the emotions and feelings of the villagers in their true colours. Of course, it may not possess the embellishment found in creative art. None the less, the folk-songs, being simple in character, natural in expression and above all being melodious arrest the attention of the scholars too. Some western scholars such as J.A. Boyle and Charles E. Gover were so enchanted by the folk-songs of Southern India that they began to collect and publish them. In fact, Boyle was the first scholar who discovered the importance and sweetness of the Telugu folk-songs. He remarks: ‘While the treasures of national poetry are being gleaned from so many languages, the store of the sweetest dialect of Southern India (Telugu) may not be overlooked and that the popular songs of the Telugu people may be collected.'
The innumerable folk songs available in Telugu are so varied that they can be classified as puranic, historical and philosophical. Foremost among the puranic stories that have captured the fancy of the folk-authors is the story of the Ramayana in general and that of Sita in particular. Recently, a collection of forty two Ramayana songs in Telugu sung by women has been published and its editor ‘Krishna Sri’ feels that several of them may have been composed by women.

This view appears to be correct in so far as the chastity of Sita and her tragic life have a more natural appeal to the women-folk than the prowess of Rama. Further, the women authors may have represented their silent sorrows and mute sufferings through the tragic incidents that occurred in Sita’s life. A glance at some of the titles of the songs given below, will reveal the fact that the story of Sita has been dealt with in detail by the folk authors.

Sita Kalyanamu (The marriage of Sita).
Sita Appagintalu (The ‘Handing over’ of Sita to Rama and others)
Sitanu Attavarintiki Pamputa (Sending Sita to her husband’s house)
Sitamavvari Alaka (The anger of Sita)
Sita Dagudumutalu (A kind of ‘hide-and-seek’ game played by Sita)
Sita Chera (The imprisonment of Sita)
Sita Agnipravesam (Sita entering the fire)
Sitadevi Vevillu (Marks of Sita’s pregnancy)
In several songs, Sita is mentioned as Sitangana. After taking leave of Lord Vishnu, she (Adilakshmi) enters a lotus in a lotus pond at Lanka, the capital of the King Ravana. When the servants of Ravana enter the pond to gather flowers, they hear a strange voice saying, ‘I shall kill you’. This is at once conveyed to the Demon King. Then, accompanied by his followers, Ravana comes to the pond and plucks the flowers. He also hears the same voice. Trembling at it, he gives the flower to his wife Mandodari to examine it thoroughly. After a careful examination, she finds a female child in it. Later, it is predicted by the astrologers that if she (Sita) were to stay in Lanka further, the city would be destroyed. Then, Mandodari summons Vibhishana and tells him that the child found in the lotus is an incarnation of Adilakshmi and that she will be the wife of Rama. As directed she is kept in a box and it is shove into the sea. Finally, she is found by Janaka in the furrow of the plough.

The above is only a very brief account of the birth of Sita as found in a folk song entitled Santa Govinda Namamulu. This is, perhaps, the source of the saying in saying in Telugu, Sita putti, Lankaku chetu (Sita was born and downfall for Lanka).

Several interesting details about Sita are found in the folk-songs. She is said to have shaken the bow of Siva. ‘Then she was only a child. After her marriage to Rama, she spends eleven years at Ayodhya. At the very sight of the ten faces of
Ravana, she faints on the ground like an uprooted mango tree. Then Ravana takes out that piece of earth on which Sita has fainted and places it in his chariot and flies by air. When Rama and his followers return to Ayodhya in the celestial car, pushpaka, the sin of Brahmahatya (killing the Brahman Ravana) takes a form and follows the plane. Since Rama does not turn up as promised, Bharata and Guha decide to put an end to their lives and are about to enter the fire; fortunately; Hanuman conveys the happy news of Rama’s return to Ayodhya and thus averts the double tragedy.

These details are not found in the VR. Some of them do not find a place even in the Telugu versions-RR and BR.

The folk-authors do not, generally, care for correctness. They are satisfied if the details given are convincing and interesting to them. The story of Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana, can be given as an illustration of this.

**The Story of Urmila**

After Lakshmana’s self-exile to be with Rama and Sita, his wife Urmila falls fast asleep for fourteen long years. After defeating Ravana in the battle, Rama returns to Ayodhya. Then Lakshmana, as directed by Rama, goes to his apartment to meet his wife, who is still asleep. At first, she does not recognize him as her husband. She mistakes him for a stranger and hence warns him against
approaching her, saying that Ravana has lost his all because of his evil desire for another’s wife. The story goes on further.

It is not known how Urmila comes to know of all these indicates that have taken place in Lanks when she has been supposedly in a deep slumber all the while. The critic may question the propriety in the statement of Urmila, but the folk-author or his audience, perhaps, find satisfaction in her reply since it is factually correct and convincing.

Sometimes folk-authors invent stories if the available details are not appealing or convincing to them. It is said that Rama has abandoned Sita, though she is pregnant at the time on the heararray report of the washerman’s aspersions on her chastity. Perhaps, this does not appeal to a certain folk-author and he invents a story, which is as follows.\(^\text{11}\)

**The Banishment of Sita**

Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana has not forgotten. Rama even after the death of her brothers and others in the battle. She thinks that Sita is the greatest hurdle in her way and so she comes to Ayodhya in the guise of a mendicant and approaches Rama who is then about to start for hunting.
The Laughter of Lakshmana

After defeating Ravana, Rama returns to Ayodhya, along with his wife and brother Lakshmana. Later, Rama was crowned in the presence of all the Gods, sages and others.

Urmiladevi’s Sleep

Urmila the wife of Lakshmana is one of the minor characters in the Ramayana. It is pity that she has not received due recognition from both the old and modern poets. Even Valmiki does not say much about her, probably because she is not closely connected with the main story. But her sacrifice and silent suffering have captured at least one Telugu folk-author who has composed a long and moving and song in appreciation of Urmila. It is very popular and sung by the women folk in our villages.

‘Is n’t it by having the desire
Of acquiring another’s wife
That Indra’s body was spoiled?
Is n’t by having the desire
Of acquiring another’s wife
That Ravana suffered utter destruction?
And knowing all this before
O, you came to do such a wrong
O, have you no sister
Or mother like me?’
Then comes Lakshmana’s reply:

‘I am Rama’s brother
Who else is like him
In the whole creation?
And am I not the son-in-law
Of king Janaka. . .
Putting Ravana to death
We brought our Sita back
If I wrongly raised my hand,
O, moon-faced woman,
I’d myself become infamous,
If you won’t get up, my love,
I won’t live any longer.¹²

Folk Songs in Tamil

There are several folk-songs in Tamil extolling the prowess of Rama. In one of them, a vivid description of this arrows is made. The arrows of Rama, it is said, go like thunder, making huge noise; they travel as quick as wind and rain¹³. There is an interesting elrap-pattu (picottak song) wherein the entire story of the Ramayana is narrated¹⁴.

It is also worthy of note that the story of Rama is narrated in different form like Ammanai, Kummi, Kavadie chintu etc. Some of the modern writers also have written folk songs dealing with the story of Rama. In this connection, the following works may be mentioned.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Work</th>
<th>Name of the Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iramayananac Chintu</td>
<td>T.Vaidyalingam Chettiyar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iramayanak Kappal</td>
<td>K.Tirumalaisami Iyengar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iramayanak Kirtanaikal</td>
<td>Muthusami Kavirayar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iramayanak Kummi</td>
<td>C.Ramaswami Kavirayar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iramayanak Kummi</td>
<td>Vekatarama Iyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iravana Kummi</td>
<td>C.Munisami Mudaliar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramar Talattu</td>
<td>A.Ratnasababhapati Mudali P.Narayanaswami Pillai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramayana Ealapattu</td>
<td>G.P.Srinvasa Iyengar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramayanak Kavadic-Chintu</td>
<td>M.Narayanaswamy Pillai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramayanak-Kummi</td>
<td>Alakia Chokkanantha Pillai Murugadasa Swami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rama Singarance Chintu</td>
<td>Tyagappandasa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also a Ramayanam, called Takkai Ramayanam written by Empiran Kavirayar whose patron was one Morur Gangeyan. Only a portion of it has been published. Besides, there are several folk songs describing some interesting episodes which are not found in KR. Sita’s drawing the picture of Ravana, a little squirrel helping Rama in constructing the causeway across the sea and other fascinating stories which are not found in KR are narrated in folk songs. There are also some songs (vedikkaip badalgal) which are meant exclusively for making fun.
A few stray verses based on the Ramayana are also available in Tamil. In one such verse, an interesting story is narrated. It is said that Sita desires to take with her to Ayodhya a grinding stone from Lanka. She also expresses her wish to Hanuman. When he is about to lift the stone, Jambavan comes there and asks Hanuman why he is lifting the stone. After knowing the wish of Sita, Jambavan just laughs to himself and approaches her.

Then he tells her that he has seen several things which could not be seen later by others – churning of the ocean. Brahma with five heads, mountains have two wings, the tasty water of the seas, the attractive guise of Manmatha, the white throat of Siva and Indra with two eyes. But he has not known in his long life that a thing given away by one is later asked for. Sita then realizes that she should not take the grinding stone since every partice of the sand in Lanka belonged to Vibhisana who is made king by Rama. This story which is prevalent in the Tamil country is narrated in a stray verse beginning with the line ‘Alaikadal Kadayak Kanden…’

There are also some works in Tamil narrating the stories of Mahiravana and other characters. Among such the works, Mayil Ravan Kalai and Salakantha Ramayanak Katai deserve mention. They show that the story of Rama is popular among the common people also.
The common belief in our country is that Ramaraiya symbolishes happiness and peace. This belief is well expressed in the following Telugu folk-song.\textsuperscript{18}

It can be seen from the above that the folk authors too have been greatly influenced by the story of the Ramayana and that the Indian thought is well preserved in the folk-songs. The folk songs contain a good number of interesting which are not found either in Valmiki’s poem or in the different language versions based on it. Perhaps, some of them may be the inentions of the folk authors themselves\textsuperscript{19}

However, some of the episodes found in folk songs are narrated in some of the Ramayana written by the scholar-poets. It is likely that they drew inspirateion from the folk authors and vice versa. Presumably, some of the folk authors may have derived inspiration only from the language poets\textsuperscript{20}. Since some of the episodes are common to both Tamil and Telugu folk songs, it may be stated that there are some common beliefs regarding the story of Rama among the million who speak these two languages.
REFERENCES

2. The Encyclopaedia Britannica.
3. Regarding the birth place and date of Somanatha, there are different and controversial theories.
4. Twoneda Padamulu, Prabhala Padmulu, Parvanta Padvalu, Ananda Padamulu and Nivali Padamulu are some of the several types of songs the poet has mentioned.
5. Basavapuranam, (Madras Andhra Granthamala), 1926, p.5.
6. Of Late, the positions has changed in both Telugu and Tamil, Several collections of folk songs have been published. It is gratifying to note that B.Rama Raju of the Osmania University has been awarded the Ph.D. Degree for his Thesis on Telugu Janapadagaya Sahityamu.
7. The second edition of Gover’s The folk songs of Southern India has been brought out in 1959 by Saiva Siddhata Publishing Works, Madras.
13. Ibid. pp.96-98.
14. Ibid.
15. Devendra Satyarthi, a devout student of Indian folklore and an author in Punjabi and Hindi. 1940.
16. These lines have been taken from the English rendering of Devendra Satyarthi 1940, pp.422-426.


19. I understand from M.P.Periaswamy Thooran that efforts are being made to bring out the entire manuscript in a book form. T.P.MeenaKshisundaran broadcast a talk on this Ramayanam from the Madras Station of the All India Radio.

1. RR, p.10.
2. RR, p.10.
3. RR, p.10.
4. RR, p.10.
5. RR, p.10.
6. RR, p.10.
7. RR, p.10.
8. RR, p.10.
CHAPTER – V

DEVIATIONS FROM VALMIKI IN TAMIL AND TELUGU RAMAYANAS
CHAPTER – V

DEVIATIONS FROM VALMIKI IN TAMIL AND TELUGU RAMAYANAS

An attempt is made in this chapter to show how the story has been narrated in RR and KR, Kanda by Kanda highlighting the deviations from the original, namely Valmiki’s poem.

Bala Kanda

The main incidents as given in RR and KR, are mentioned below for a comparative study.

Ranganatha Ramayanam

Obeisance to the Gods and poets like Valmiki, Vyasa and Sukabrahma.

Dialogue between Narada and Valmiki

The story of the Ramayana given in a Nutshell

The city of Ayodhya

Greatness of the King Dasaratha.

Dasaratha think of performing Putrakameshti

The story of Risyasringa

Dasaratha Commences the Putrakameshti under the guidance of Risyasringa.

The request of the Gods to Brahma

The gods request Vishnu to kill Ravana.
The Yojnapurnsha gives to Dasaratha the sweet food, payasa

The birth of Rama, Lakshmana and others

The childhood of the King’s sons

The request of the Sage Visvamitra to Dasaratha

Dasaratha agrees to send Rama, Lakshmana with the sage, after hearing the advice of Vasishtha.

The story of the Anga Country

Visvamitra narrates the story of Tataka, a female rakshasa

The Killing of Tataka

Visvamitra presents to Rama astra and sastra

The story of Siddharasrama or Vamanasarama

Rama and Lakshmana Project the Yajna of Visvamitra

Rama and Lakshmana, accompanied by Visvamitra, start to the city of Mithila.

The story of Kausambi

The genealogy of Visvamira

The story of the birth of Kumaraswami

The story of the river Ganges

The story of the song of Sagara

The story of the churning of the milky ocean.
The story of Maruts

Rama, Lakshmana and the Sage Reach Mithila

Satananda, the son of Ahalya and Purohit of Janaka tells Rama the
greatness of Visvamitra. The story of the Sage is told elaborately.

The story of the ‘Bow of Siva’

The breaking of the bow

Dasaratha and his company start to Mithila.

The genealogy of Dasaratha

The genealogy of Janaka

The marriage of Sita

Parasurama attacks Rama (on the way) when the latter starts for Ayodhya.

The defeat of Parasuram.

Rama and others dreach Ayodhya.

**KAMBA RAMAYANAM**

Obeisance to the Almighty and Valmiki

In praise of the river Sarayu

Description of the Kosala Country

The greatness of Ayodhya

The greatness of Dasaratha

The Gods complain to Vishnu of their sufferings
Dasaratha thinking of performing Putrakameshti

A bhuta emerges from the hama fire and places on the ground a plate containing amrita panda.

The descent of Rama.

The sage Visvamitra approaches the King Dasaratha.

Rama and Lakshmana accompany Visvamitra

The Killing of Tajaks.

The story of the river Gomati

The story of Mavali or Mahabali

Rama and Lakshmana protect the Yajna done by Visvamitra.

Rama, Lakshmana and Visvamitra start to Mithila

The story of Durvasa cursing Indra

The churning of the milky ocean

The story of the Ganges

The story of Ahalya

Rama and Other go to Mithila

Rama and Sita see and love each other before the marriage

Satananda narrates to Rama the greatness of Visvamitra

The story of Sanassepha

The story of the ‘Bow of Siva’. 
The story of Sita

Dasaratha Starts to Mithila (the description of the journey is very elaborate)

Halt at the Mountain Ghandrasaila

Halt at a pleasure garden

Sports with waters and taking wine

Janaka’s welcome to Dasaratha.

Rama’s procession in the streets of Mithila.

The decorated Sita was brought to the marriage mantap

The marriage of Sita and Rama.

The defeat of Parasurama

Rama and others reach Ayodhya.

It can be seen from the above that R.R. contains at the beginning a dialogue between the sage Narada and Valmiki and a very brief account of the story of the Ramayana while KR commences with the actual story. Valmiki in the first three sargas mentions a dialogue between Narada and Valmiki and this throws light on the outstanding qualities of Rama. It is only in the fifth sarga, that Kusa and Lava being to sing the Ramayana as composed by Valmiki in the court of Rama at Ayodhya. Then the story goes on.

The descriptions of the river Sarayu, of the country Kosala and of the city of Ayodhya are fairly elaborate in KR. Kamban painstakingly describes the study
for walls, the beautiful buildings and flags hoisted at the top of those buildings, the maritime trade, the pastimes of the people and several other things. All these indicate the prosperity of the country and the grandeur of the city. In RR, description of Ayodhya is made with restraint. The poet says simply that on the banks of Sarayu, in the country of Kosala, there flourishers a city, Ayodhya which looks like an ornament to the earth. Some more details are provided. One of them is that all the citizens of the city are ardent devotees of Lord Vishnu\(^1\). Then the poet speaks of the greatness of the ruler Dasaratha.

**Dasaratha**

In K.R. Dasartha is said to have ruled for sixty thousand years, subduing his foes\(^2\). One of his worries is that calamity and confusion may afflict the world after his death. One day, he discloses his uneasiness to the great Vasishtha and seeks his advice. Moved by his words, the sage thinks for a while. Then he remembers a promise given once by Lord Vishnu to the gods that he would arrest the activities of the Rakshasas whose mission seems to destroy the good. Vasisthata further recalls the episode wherein the gods first request Lord Siva to help them\(^3\). But he regrets his inability to kill the Rakshasas and suggests that they should all go to Brahma for help. Finally they approach Vishnu and detail the mischievous activities of the demons in general and of Ravana in particular. Then Vishnu assures them that he would soon take birth as the son of Dasaratha.
After recalling the above in detail, Vasistha suggests that Dasaratha may perform a yaga which rewards him with sons endowed with great valour. The king readily and happily agrees to this suggestion and asks the sage for further details regarding the yaga.

Now, let us examine how this particular incident is narrated in R.R.

Dasaratha is unhappy because he has no children and that he is getting older day by day. He, therefore, summons all his ministers and addresses them as follows: ‘I have lived for several years. I have done several sacrifies (yagas) and made several gifts. I have everything in plenty. But I have only one worry, namely I am childless. A childless person will not attain the higher world. Hence, I wish to possess male children. First, I shall do the asvamedha (horse sacrifice) and then putrakameshti4.

Afterwards, Vasistha and others are called for. The king asks the sage to help him perform the sacrifice. Accordingly Vasistyha assures him of their help and tells the king that he will get children after performing putrakameshti. Dasaratha feels very happy at these words. When he retires to his palace, he tells the queens of his desire.

The king is elated and alone when Suta approaches the king and narrates to him the story of Risyasringa, a great sage, under whose direction Dasaratha later performs the Putrakameshti. During the that sacrifice the gods come to receive
personally their concerned oblations. Then they remember Ravana and his
mischievous activities. They immediately approach Brahma and request him to
conceive a plan by which Ravana could be destroyed. Brahma then replies that the
Demon-King would neither be killed by the gods, nor the Gandharvas, nor the
Rakshasas. He would be killed only by man. Brahma further says that Ravana was
no other than that Hiranyakasipu who was killed by an earlier incarnation
(Narasimha, Man-lion) of Lord Vishnu. Afterwards, as suggested by Brahma, all
the gods approach Vishnu and request him to take birth as the son of Dasaratha
and project the world by killing the wicked Ravana. Vishnu readily agrees to help
them.

It can be noticed from the above accounts that they differ from each other
though their common aim remains the same Kamba’s Dasaratha has great
reverence for his family preceptor and guide, Vasistha. To him, he has always
looked like the personification of Brahma himself. He discloses his worry only to
his teacher and seeks his advice. He does not consult his ministers in this regard.
According to KR, it is Vasishtha, not any minister, who tells the king the story of
Risyasringa. All this shows that Kamban’s Dasaratha has greater regard for a sage
than anybody else. In fact, in the course of his dialogue with his teacher, he
expresses his anxiety about the plight of the ascetics after his death.
The Telugu version appears to be close to the original. In RR, Dasaratha himself expresses his desire to perform both asvamedha and putrakameshti. First, he disclose this to his ministers and then to his teacher Vasishththa and others. In RR, Vasishththa appears to be a mere teacher and the name of another teacher Vamadeva, as found in the original, is absent. Further, in RR, Suta narrates the story of Risyasringa while in Valmiki’s poem, Sumantra the trusted minister of the King tells the story.

Under the able guidance of Risyasringa, Dasaratha performs the putrakameshti. The gods are satisfied with it. Then a beautiful person with a gold vessels containing the divine food (Payasa) emerges from the sacred fire and appears before Dasaratha. He is no other than the Yajnapurusha. Dasaratha receives the vessel with great reverence and afterwards distributes the ambrosia to his queens. The narration of RR of the above incident is very close to the original. But this is somewhat differently stated in KR.

Accordingly to KR, a bhuta (ghost) comes out of the sacred fire and disappears into the fire soon after placing on the ground a plate containing amrita pinds which is distributed to the queens by Dasaratha.

**The Birth of Rama**

The details given by RR and KR regarding the birth of Rama are very close to the original. But RR states that Rama was born on Wednesday
(Budhavasaramu)\textsuperscript{11}. This additional detail is found in other Telugu Versions, namely BR\textsuperscript{12} and even the Ramayanam by Katta Varadaraju which is generally regarded as a faithful rendering of Valmiki’s poem\textsuperscript{13}.

It is stated in KR that a horoscope has been drawn for Rama and his brother as well\textsuperscript{14}. It is further stated that the naming ceremony (namakaranam) has taken place on the thirteenth day while it is the eleventh day in RR\textsuperscript{15}.

**The Childhood of Rama**

While KR is silent about the childhood of Rama RR speaks of it and even mentions an ancient. One day, when Rama and his friends play a game using a ball and a stick, Manthara the servant maid of Kaikeyi passes that way. She hits the ball with her hands, for which Rama punishes her by breaking her leg with the playing stick. She immediately reports the matter to Kaikeyi who, in turn informs the King. Then Dasaratha requests Vasishtha to teach his sons the Vedas and other branches of learning\textsuperscript{16}.

Though this incidents is not found in VR, the poet may have introduced this story to suggest that Manthara who later sabotages the coronation ceremony of Rama nurses a grievance against Rama even from his Childhood.
REFERENCES

1. RR, p.10.
5. Ibid, pp.10 to 11.
6. Ibid, 1-5-1.
10. Ibid, 1-5-86 and 87.
15. BR, 1-167
1. RR, p.10.
5. Ibid, pp.10 to 11.
6. Ibid, 1-5-1.
10. Ibid, 1-5-86 and 87.
15. BR, 1-167
CONCLUSIONS
CONCLUSIONS

1. The story of the Ramayana, as narrated by Valmiki, has attracted the Telugu and Tamil poets, old and modern, and the story is narrated in every branch of literature from the classical type of kavya to the folk song, sung by the unlettered.

This clearly indicates the popularity of the story among the people belonging to all walks of life and that the influence of the Ramayana on the Telugu and Tamil literatures is pervasive, longstanding and continuous.

2. It is worthy of note that in Tamil, a Ramayana was written even in the Sangam period. This seems to be the earliest Ramayana written in any of the Indian languages. Though this work is considered as lost, it is significant that some interesting episodes based on the story have been preserved in similes and proverbs and that some of the Sangam works contain references to some interesting incidents of the Ramayana story.

3. Even though Telugu does not have a Ramayana written in the earliest times, namely before the 12th century, still it is worth mentioning that there are several proverbs and similes relating to the Ramayana story. This shows that the story has been in vogue in the Telugu country from very early times, though it came to be written only in later years.
4. Among the complete Ramayanas available in Telugu, Ranganatha Ramayananam written by Gona Buddha Reddi appears to be the earliest. He may be regarded as the author of the poem till we get convincing evidence to the effect that Ranganatha was its author. Perhaps, a poet by name Ranganatha may have assisted him in writing it.

Though some Telugu scholars regard the Bhaskara Ramayanam as a faithful rendering of the Valmiki Ramayana, still it may be said that the Ranganatha Ramayananam is a popular work in Telugu, read and appreciated by scholars and laymen alike. Some of the fascinating portions of this Ramayana are recited in puppetry (tolu bommalata). Another unique feature of this great poem is the introduction of several episodes which are not found in the original. Further, some of the minor characters like Sulochana are well depicted in this work.

5. The Telugu and Tamil version do not follow the Sanskrit original in all its details, though they are faithful to the original in respect of the main incidents of the story. In other words, the Telugu and Tamil poets have exercised some freedom in developing the story without scarifying the spirit of the original. It may, however, be said that at some places both Kamban and Buddha Reddi follow the original very closely; in fact the latter has virtually translated a few passages.
It is also interesting that the old poets in Telugu or Tamil did not attempt any exact translation of Valmiki’s epic. It may be said that it was not their intention to translate the Sanskrit epic verbatim, but to give their readers the story as presented in the original. It is only in modern times that faithful translations of Valmiki’s Ramayana came to be written in Telugu and Tamil. In Telugu, we find several faithful translations in prose only are available in Tamil.

6. The human and heroic Rama of Valmiki’s poem has been deified in both R.R. and K.R. just as in the other language versions. This appears understandable because Rama had become an avatar of Vishnu (God-incarnate) by the time the Ramayana came to be written in the regional languages of the country. The Bhakti movement, as prevalent in those days, may have helped to a considerable degree in popularizing this idea. However, it may be mentioned that RR and KR have depicted Rama as God incarnate with human attributes.

7. It appears that the story of Rama has been greatly popularized in the Tamil country by the Alwars through their soul-filling pasurams and that Kamban has given a permanent place to it in the history of Tamil literature thorough his immortal work. His devotion to the subject, delineation of characters and his exquisite poetry must have made his work popular among the Tamils.
After KR came into light, it is obvious that the Ramayanas written in Tamil before Kamban have been lost sight of. The position seems to be unchanged even in the post-Kamban period.

8. The presence of several Rama mandirs (temples) in villages in the Telugu country and the availability of several works in Telegu relating to the story of Rama show that the Telugu mind is a stronghold of the Rama cult. It is significant that some scholars have regarded Rama as the favourite deity of the Andhras. A distinguished modern Telugu poet has described Rama of Bhadrachalam as the Telugu deity. The reason for such tremendous popularity for the Rama cult may be surmised as follows:

It seems that the Vedic dharma was in existence in the Telugu country from the earliest times. It suffered a setback when Buddhism reached its zenith. But with the downfall of Buddhism in the 6th century A.D. not only the Vedic dharma but also two of its important sects-Saivism and Vaishnavism-were also revived. Perhaps, during that revival period, the Rama cult must have become popular.

Further, the Telugu in general are Smartas, having no antipathy to Siva or Vishnu and Rama is said to have lived for some time on the banks of the river Godavari.

In view of the above, the Rama cult may have attracted the Telugu people more than any other cult.
9. It may be said that influence of the Jain version of the Ramayana is not found on Kamban, though he is said to have modeled his work on Jivaka Chintamani, a Jain work, with regard to style and though a Jain Ramayana is said to have been written in Tamil before Kamban.

10. It is significant that some of the details narrated in RR are found in the Jain version of the Ramayana story and the North-Western Recension of VR. This gives room for doubt as to whether the Telugu poet has also consulted the above besides the Southern Recension of VR and the different Puranas in Sanskrit.

11. It appears that Kamban may have consulted some Sanskrit works based on the Ramayana (including the plays of Bhasa and Janakiharamam) besides VR. He may have also consulted the Tamil version of the story of Rama which were available in his time.

12. Both the Telugu and Tamil poets have given some episodes which are not found in Valmiki’s poem. They must have recorded them in their works either to satisfy their audiences, who are familiar with those episodes, or they must have found them in other works based on the Ramayana. The story of Hiranyakasipu, as narrated in KR and the account of Sulochana, the devout wife of Indrajit as described in RR may be cited as examples.
13. In KR it can be noticed that there is a slight shift in the plot at one or two places. According to the original, while Angada is fighting against Indrajit, the latter shoots Rama and Lakshmana with a missile called nagastra (serpent-arrows) and both Rama and Lakshmana are chained by it. The jubilant Ravana then orders that Sita should be taken to the battlefield in an aerial car, pushpaka, so that she might agree to his wish after seeing the condition of Rama and Lakshmana. Thus Ravana cleverly exploits the situation. This incident occurs at the commencement of the battle.

KR narrates this incident not at the commencement of the battle, but after the death of Kumbhakarna; further, only Lakshmana and others are bound by the serpent-arrows. Rama is not affected by them.

According to KR, Ravana sends Sita to the battlefield when Indrajit shoots the powerful missile brahmastra at Lakshmana. As a result of it, he swoons. Unable to bear this plight and overcome with great sorrow, Rama too swoons.

14. Some of the details, as given in the Telugu folk songs, are found to be very close to those mentioned in KR. The following may be cited as an example to this. In KR it is told that Ravana does not touch Sita but uproots the very cottage in which she lives and puts the same in his aerial car and flies away. These details are not narrated by Valmiki. The Telugu versions RR
and BR written by scholar-poets also do not contain these details. But Sakkshhepa Ramayanam, a lengthy folk song in Telugu has it that Ravana takes up the mass of earth on which Sitat swoons and puts the same in his aerial car.

So also, some of the folk songs in Tamil contain some interesting episodes which are not found in KR but narrated in RR and BR.

RR and BR narrate the story of a squirrel which helps Rama in the construction of a causeway across the sea. Tondaradippodi Alwar alias Vipranarayana, who flourished long before Kamban, is one of his hymus (pasurams) refers to this incident. Though this has been omitted in KR this story is said to be found in a Tamil folk-song and this is popular even to this day among the Tamils.

From the above, it appears that there should have been some common stories or beliefs regarding the Ramayana among the Telugu and Tamil peoples.

15. It is said that the message of Kamba Ramayana is one of universal brotherhood. In the case of Ranganatha Ramayanam, it may be mentioned that it is the possibility of receiving God’s blessings through devotion (bhakti). Though the poet does not say this directly, he communicates it through Lakshmana in the context of the episode of the squirrel’s devotion to Rama and his cause.
APPENDIX
# APPENDIX-I

## WORKS IN TELUGU BASED ON OR ABOUT THE RAMAYANA

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### APPENDIX-II

**WORKS IN TAMIL BASED ON OR ABOUT THE RAMAYANA**

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