

Versions of Ramayana



Rama (right) seated on the shoulders of Hanuman, battles the demon-king Ravana

Depending on the methods of counting, as many as three hundred^{[1][2]} versions of the Indian epic poem, the *Ramayana*, are known to exist. The oldest version is generally recognized to be the Sanskrit version attributed to the sage Valmiki.

The Ramayana has spread to many Asian countries outside of India, including Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam and China.^{[3][4]} The original Valmiki version has been adapted or translated into various regional languages, which have often been marked more or less by plot twists and thematic adaptations. Some of the important adaptations of the classic tale include the 12th-century Tamil language *Ramavataram*, 14th-century Telugu language *Sri Ranganatha Ramayanam*, the Khmer *Reamker*, the Old Javanese *Kakawin Ramayana*, and the Thai *Ramakien*, the Lao *Phra Lak Phra Lam*, and the Burmese *Yama Zatdaw*.

The manifestation of the core themes of the original *Ramayana* is far broader even than can be understood from a consideration of the different languages in which it ap-

pears, as its essence has been expressed in a diverse array of regional cultures and artistic mediums. For instance, the *Ramayana* has been expressed or interpreted in *Lkhaon Khmer* dance theatre, in the *Mappila Songs* of the Muslims of Kerala and Lakshadweep,^[5] in the Indian operatic tradition of *Yakshagana*, and in the epic paintings still extant on, for instance, the walls of Thailand's *Wat Phra Kaew* palace temple. In Indonesia, the tales of the *Ramayana* appear reflected in ballet performances, masked danced drama, and *Wayang* shadow puppetry.^[6] Angkor Wat in Siem Reap also has mural scenes from the epic Battle of Lanka on one of its outer walls.

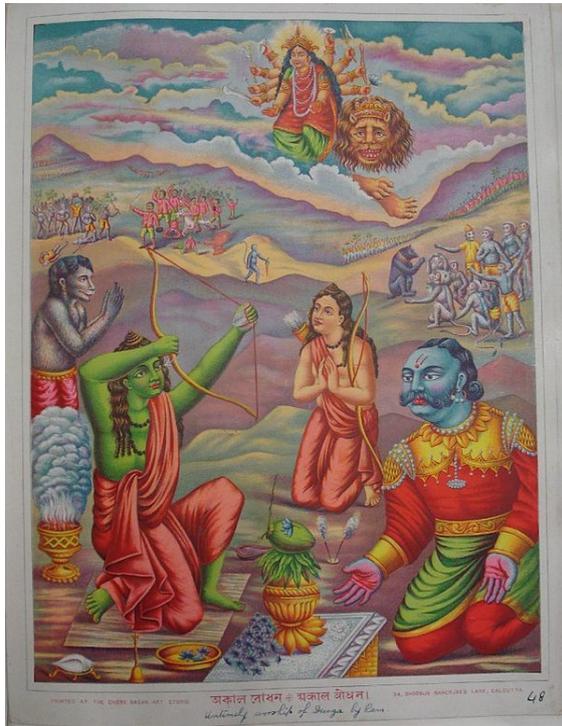
1 Sanskrit versions

Below are a few of the most prominent Sanskrit versions of the Ramayana. Some primarily recount Valmiki's narrative, while others focus more on peripheral stories and/or philosophical expositions:

- **Adhyatma Ramayana** or spiritual Ramayana is extracted from the *Brahmananda Purana*, traditionally ascribed to Vyasa. It is thought to be the inspiration for Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas* in Awadhi. While the Valmiki Ramayana emphasizes Rama's human nature, the *Adhyatma Ramayana* tells the story from the perspective of his divinity. It is organized into seven *Kandas*, parallel to Valmiki's.
- **Vasistha Ramayana** (more commonly known as **Yoga Vasistha**) is traditionally attributed to Valmiki. It is principally a dialogue between Vasistha and Rama in which Vasistha advances many of the principle tenets of *Advaita Vedanta*. It includes many anecdotes and illustrative stories, but does not recount Valmiki's story of Rama in detail.
- **Laghu Yoga Vasistha**, by Abhinanda of Kashmir, is an abbreviated version of the *Yoga Vasistha*.^[7]
- **Ananda Ramayana** is traditionally attributed to Valmiki. While it briefly recounts the traditional story of Rama, it is composed primarily of stories peripheral, though related, to Valmiki's narrative. These include Ravana's abduction of Sita and Rama's installment of the *Shiva Lingam* at *Rameswaram*.^[8]
- **Agastya Ramayana** is also traditionally attributed to Agastya.

- **Adbhuta Ramayana**, traditionally attributed to Valmiki, includes related stories of Rama. Its emphasis is on the role of Sita, and includes an expanded story of the circumstances of her birth as well as an account of her defeat of Ravana's older brother, also known as Ravana but with 1000 heads.
- The Ramayana story is also recounted within other Sanskrit texts, including: the **Mahabharata** (in the Ramokhyana Parva of the Vana Parva);^[9] **Bhagavata Purana** contains a concise account of Rama's story in its ninth skandha;^[10] brief versions also appear in the Vishnu Purana as well as in the Agni Purana.
- An eleventh-century Sanskrit play entitled **Mahanataka** by Hanumat relates the story of Rama in nine, ten, or fourteen acts, depending on recension.^[11]
- A sixth-century manuscript *Dasa Griba Rakshash Charitram Vadha* contains five kandas: Balakanda and Uttarakanda are missing. This version portrays Rama as more of a human than god.^[12]

2 Regional versions



Rama is shown about to offer his eyes to make up the full number - 108 - of lotus blossoms needed in the puja that he must offer to the goddess Durga to gain her blessing. Scene from Krittivasi Ramayan.

Some noteworthy examples of these additional renderings of the *Ramayana* tale include:

- Andhra Pradesh - The Sri Ranganatha Ramayanam was adapted by Gona Budda Reddy and is the Telugu version of the Ramayana. The *Molla Ramayanamu* was adapted by poet Molla. The most extensive work in Telugu is that of Sri Viswanadha Satyanarayana, Srimadramayana Kalpavriksham. This is perhaps a free re-telling of the Valmiki Ramayana. It was awarded the first jnanpith award in Telugu, for the poet who was later acclaimed as the Kavi Samrat.
- Tamil Nadu - The Tamil *Kambaramayanam*, a popular version, written by poet Kamban in the 12th century.
- Karnataka - The Kannada versions of the Ramayana – the *Kumudendu Ramayana* (a Jain version), written in the 13th century and the *Kumara-Valmiki Torave Ramayana*, written in the 16th century. There is another version titled *Ramachandra Charita Purana* written by Nagachandra during the 13th century.
- Assam - Saptakanda Ramayana, The Assamese *Katha Ramayana* or *Kotha Ramayana* in the 14th century by Madhava Kandali.
- Bengal - The Bengali *Krittivasi Ramayan* written by Krittibas Ojha in the 15th century.
- Orissa - The Oriya *Dandi Ramayana* or *Jagamohan Ramayana* was adapted by Balaram Das in the 16th century.
- Maharashtra - The Marathi *Bhavartha Ramayana* written by Eknath in the 16th century. There is also reference of a Ramayana being translated into old Marathi during the 12th or 13th century.
- Goa - *Ramayanu* written by Krishnadasa Shama in the 15th century in *Kardalipura*, Goa in Konkani, manuscripts found in Portugal.^{[13][14]}
- Awadh - The *Ramcharitmanas* written by Goswami Tulsidas in the 16th century is the Ramayana version popular in North India.
- Kerala - The Malayalam language *Kannassa Ramayanam* written by Niranam Rama Panicker in the 16th century, *Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipattu* written by Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan in the 16th century and “Mappila Ramayanam.” among the Muslims.^[15]
- Gujarat - The *Tulsi-Krta Ramayana* is a Gujarati adaptation of Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas* in the 17th century, by the poet Premanand Swami.
- Urdu version called the *Pothi Ramayana* was written in the 17th century.
- Jammu and Kashmir - The Kashmiri *Ramavatara Charita* was written in the 19th century.

- **Kannada** - Two prose works by Nanadalike Lakshminarayana ('Muddanna') entitled *Adbhuta Ramayana* (1895) and *Ramaswamedham* (1898).
- **Buddhism** - Dasarata Jataka. This version is notable for depicting Rama and Sita as siblings who marry. Such sibling marriages are a common symbolic imagery in early Buddhist literature to denote purity of a dynasty. As the Buddha is supposed to have come from the Ikshvaku clan (of Rama) this symbolised his dynastic merits.
- **Jain** - Paumachariyam, the most influent among the Jain versions is written as a polemic against Sanskrit versions asserting that all characters in the Ramayana were mere mortals who engaged in conflict over moral issues. The only superhuman feat mentioned is Ravana's ability to fly through the clouds (meghavahana). All characters are depicted as Jains and the Rama, Sita and Lakshmana visit Jain pilgrimage sites rather than ashrams (as in Valmiki ramayana) during their stay in the forest.

Champu Ramayana, Ananda Rayamana, Mantra Ramayana, Giridhara Ramayana, Shree Ramayana mangeri, Shree Ranganatha Ramayana, Bhaskara Ramayana, Gobinda Ramayana written by Guru Gobind Singhji, in samvat 1655, Radhey Shyam Ramayana.

3 Versions outside India

The following are among the versions of the Ramayana that have emerged outside India:

- **Burma (Myanmar)** - *Yama Zatdaw*
- **Cambodia** - *Reamker*
- **Java, Indonesia** - *Kakawin Ramayana*
- **Bali, Indonesia** - *Kakawin Ramayana*
- **Sumatera, Indonesia** - *Ramayana Swarnadwipa*
- **Kingdom of Lan Na** - *Phommachak*
- **Laos** - *Phra Lak Phra Lam*
- **Malaysia** - *Hikayat Seri Rama*
- **Nepal** - The Nepal Bhasa version called *Siddhi Ramayan* was written by Mahakavi Siddhidas Mahaju Amatya during Nepal Bhasa renaissance era and the Khas language (later called "Nepali") version of *Bhanubhaktako Ramayan* by Bhanubhakta Acharya marked the first epic written in the language.
- **Philippines** - *Maharadia Lawana*
- **Tai Lü language** - *Langka Sip Hor*

- **Thailand** - *Ramakien*
- **Tibet, China** — found in several manuscripts from Dunhuang^[16]

4 Contemporary versions

Contemporary prose versions of the epic Ramayana include *Sri Ramayana Darshanam* by Dr. K. V. Puttappa in Kannada and *Ramayana Kalpavrikshamu* by Viswanatha Satyanarayana in Telugu, both of which have been awarded the Jnanpith Award. A prose version called *Geet Ramayan* in Marathi by G.D. Madgulkar was rendered in music by Sudhir Phadke and is considered to be a masterpiece of Marathi literature. The popular Indian author R. K. Narayan wrote a shortened prose interpretation of the epic. In addition, Ramesh Menon wrote a single-volume edition of the Ramayana, which has received praise from scholars. A short version with a somewhat contemporary feel, influenced, according to the author, by contemporary representations of guerrilla warfare, appeared in Martin Buckley's Ramayana-based travelogue, *An Indian Odyssey* (Random House London, 2008). C Rajgopalachari, India's only Indian Governor General, also wrote a single volume Ramayana, published by Bhavans in 1957. In September 2006, the first issue of *Ramayan 3392 A.D.* was published by Virgin Comics, featuring the Ramayana as re-envisioned by author Deepak Chopra and filmmaker Shekhar Kapur.

Most recently, popular Indian author Ashok Banker, authored an eight-volume imaginative retelling based on the Ramayana which found considerable success and was credited with ushering in a new wave of interest in the epic as well as other mythological retellings. Banker's version took considerable liberties with the original Sanskrit epic yet found critical acclaim. It is claimed to be the most popular retelling of the epic currently.

The latest in the retelling of the epic is from Ravi Venugopal, an US based NRI narrating the story from the eyes of Rama. The first volume is I, Rama trilogy is Age of Seers and it talks about an age old Rama who introspects his life and the events happening with a pragmatic view. The book is the first of its kind and stuns the reader with new perspectives of several characters. The book tries to give a scientific lift to the ancient epic.

4.1 Screen

The Ramayana has been adapted on screen as well, most notably as the television series *Ramayan* by producer Ramanand Sagar, which is based primarily on the *Ramcharitmanas* and Valmiki's Ramayana and, at the time, was the most popular series in Indian television history. In the late 1990s, Sanjay Khan made a series called *Jai Hanuman*, recounting tales from the life of Hanuman and related characters from the Ramayana.

A Japanese animated film called *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama* was released in the early 1990s. US animation artist Nina Paley retold the *Ramayana* from Sita's point of view (with a secondary story about Paley's own marriage) in the animated musical *Sita Sings the Blues*. An Indian animated film called *Ramayana: The Epic* was released in October 2010. The Stories Without Borders Production Company has a documentary in production about different versions of the *Ramayana* and a second India epic, the *Mahabharata*, across South and Southeast Asia that is slated to film begin filming in 2014.

4.2 Stage

Starting in 1978, and under the supervision of Baba Hari Dass, the *Ramayana* has been performed every year by Mount Madonna School in Watsonville,^[17] California. Currently, it is the largest yearly, Western version of the epic being performed. It takes the form of a colorful musical with custom costumes, sung and spoken dialog, jazz-rock orchestration and dance. This performance takes place in a large audience theater setting usually in June, in San Jose, CA.^[18] Baba Hari Dass has thought acting arts, costume-attire design, masks making, and choreography to bring alive characters of Sri Ram, Sita, Hanuman, Lakshmana, Shiva, Parvati, Vibhishan, Jatayu, Sugriva, Surpanakha, Ravana and his rakshasa court, Meghnaad, Kumbhakarna, and the army of monkeys and demons.

Late Tamil Actor R. S. Manohar played Ravana as the Antagonist in his Magnum Opus *Lankeswaran*, in which he projects the heroic and better side of Ravana. It was staged more than 1,800 times.^[19]

4.3 Comic series

Artist Vikas Goel and writer Vijayendra Mohanty have created a ten-part comic series called *Ravanayan* that presents the story of *Ramayana* from Ravana's perspective.^[20]

Following the success of Ashok Banker's *Ramayana Series* retellings, a graphic novel adaptation was released in 2010.

5 See also

- *Ramayana*
- Vernacular
- Epic Poetry

6 Footnotes

[1] Camille Bulcke, *Ramkatha: Utpatti aur Vikās* (The Rāma

story: Original and development), Prayāg: Hindī Pariṣad Prakāśan, 1950.

- [2] A. K. Ramanujan, "Three hundred Rāmāyaṇas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation", in Paula Richman (ed.), *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991, p. 48, note 3.
- [3] "Ramayana(s) retold in Asia". *The Hindu*. 19 February 2012. Retrieved 2015-02-07.
- [4] "History of Rama and Ramayan". *Hindu Online*. 2010. Retrieved 2015-02-07.
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- [9] *Mahabharata*. Parimal Publications. 2006.
- [10] *Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana*. Gita Press, Gorakhpur. ISBN 81-293-0155-5.
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- [14] Bhembre, Uday (September 2009). *Konkani bhashetalo paylo sahityakar:Krishnadas Shama*. Sunaparant Goa. pp. 55–57.
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- [18] Jha, Ritu (July 8, 2011). "California school celebrates Ramayan for 33 years". *rediff News*. rediff.com. Retrieved Aug 3, 2014.

- [19] “Superstar of Tamil theatre”. October 2, 2000.
- [20] Banerjee, Manali (2011-07-09). “The Ramayana as Ravana saw it”. *Hindustan Times*. New Delhi: HT Media. Retrieved 2011-07-23.

7 Bibliography

- *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, ed. by Paula Richman. University of California Press, 1991.

8 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

8.1 Text

- **Versions of Ramayana** *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Versions_of_Ramayana?oldid=738699503 *Contributors:* Utcursch, Chaipau, Kwamikagami, Giraffedata, Wiki-uk, Eukesh, Woohookitty, Shreevatsa, Stevey7788, Rjwilmsi, Koavf, Bgwhite, SmackBot, Jagged 85, Chris the speller, Nygdan, Abjad, KNM, Cydebot, DBaba, Ekabhishek, J mareeswaran, Skumarlabot, Krishnachandranvn, Redtigerxyz, KC Panchal, UncleMartin, Svick, ImageRemovalBot, Mr. Granger, The Thing That Should Not Be, Vig1983, Dougie WII, Addbot, He A, Browndog72, AnomieBOT, Jarrodw, LilHelpa, FrescoBot, Peroxwhy2gen, Jonesey95, Nijgoykar, Khamgatam, SmilingOrangeYak, RAMA, EmausBot, John of Reading, Akhilan, Terzarima, Helpful Pixie Bot, Curb Chain, Beecher70, BG19bot, Vagobot, Dal khalsa, Solomon7968, Phyo WP, SatyamMithya, BattyBot, Jagdishsarva, Vipinkumartvla, Khazar2, Sjlake, PC-XT, Sai santhosh00, Tigercompanion25, Varanasi51, Pradeepwb, Infinite0694, Capankajsmilyo, Franklin Khantzawhein, InternetArchiveBot, GreenC bot and Anonymous: 35

8.2 Images

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