



KINCHITKARAM DHARMA SAMSTHAPANAM

# Ramayana - Around the World



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# Introduction

Ramayana is known as “**AdhiKavyam**” meaning the first ever poem, that sings in praise of SriRama, an incarnation of Lord Mahavishnu. As long as there are mountains, seas, sun and moon in this world, Ramayana also exists. SriRama was born in our country Bharat!!

The first ever Ramayana was written by **Adhikavi, Valmiki Rishi**. It is popularly known as “**VALMIKI RAMAYANA**”

The epic that talks about SriRama, “**SRIMAD RAMAYANA**” is also famous throughout Bharat, not only Bharat but is famous in the entire world. You will be astonished to know that there are around 300 different versions of Ramayana available all over the world. Really?? 300 versions for an epic that took place almost 17 lakh years ago!!!

**Amazing right... In this part let us learn about the various Ramayanas around the world. Ready for a world tour on Ramayana?? Come let's travel the world through this document!!**



## Bharat, India



There are **many versions of Ramayana in India**. Let's learn about the main versions of India in various languages.

1. **Valmiki Ramayana** - This is the original Ramayana written in Sanskrit by **Aadhikavi Valmiki Rishi**. This is also known as Adhikavyam.
2. **Adhyathma Ramayana** - This is another version of Ramayana in **Sanskrit** in which Sri Rama is considered as a normal human being. This is a part of Brahmanda Purana.
3. **Raguvamsam** - This is a Sanskrit version written by the famous poet **Kalidasa**.
4. **Raghuveeragadhyam** - This is Ramayana in prose version written by **Swamy Desikan**, a **guru and scholar of SriVaishnava sampradhaya**.
5. **Kamba Ramayana** - This is a **Ramayana** written in **Tamil** based on Valmiki's Ramayana written by **Kambar**. This was approved by SangaTamil poets at Srirangam, Trichy. This is **popular in TamilNadu**. This is in the form of **4 line poems**.
6. **Ramacharithra Manas** - This is **Ramayana** written in **Avadh language** by **Goswami Tulsidas**. This is very **popular in North India** and almost read by everyone. This is in the form of **2 line poems**.

# Nepal

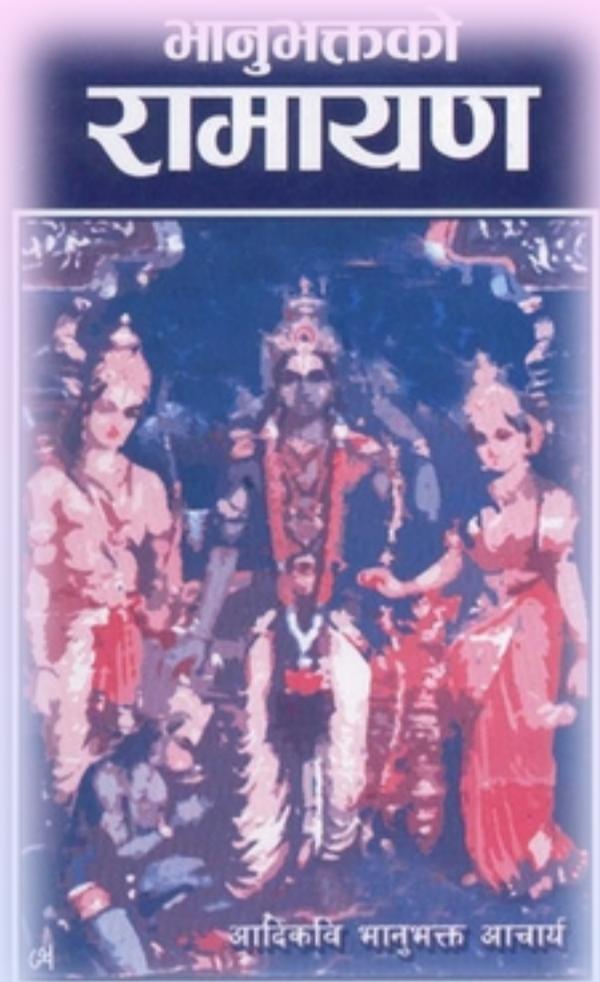


Nepal is the site where oldest manuscript of Ramayana was discovered. Nepal also gave rise to two regional variants in mid 19th – early 20th century.

- ❖ One, written by **Bhanubhakta Acharya**, is considered the first epic of Nepali language, while the other,
- ❖ Second, written by **Siddhidas Mahaju** in Nepal Bhasa was a foundational influence in the Nepal Bhasa renaissance.

Ramayana written by Bhanubhakta Acharya is one of the most popular verses in Nepal.

The popularisation of the Ramayana and its tale, originally written in Sanskrit Language was greatly enhanced by the work of Bhanubhakta. **Mainly because of his writing of Nepali Ramayana, Bhanubhakta is also called Aadi Kavi or The Pioneering Poet.**



**Janakpur -  
Mithila country  
ruled by Sita's  
father Janakar  
during Ramayana  
period**

# Tibet and Xinjiang



**Dunhuang caves - Library caves**

## Myanmar



**Yama Zataw**, unofficially Myanmar's national epic, is the Burmese version of the Ramayana. There are nine known pieces of the Yama Zataw in Myanmar. The Burmese name for the story itself is **Yamayana**, while **zataw** refers to the acted play or being part of **jataka tales**.

In Burma, “**Rama**” is known as “**Yama**” and “**Sita**” is known as “**Me Thida**”

**Ramakien** - Another popular epic of Myanmar.

**Yama Pyazat** (young Rama's life)  
**Thidayakan** (Sita's song) **Yama yakan** (Rama's song) - These are written by U Poe based on Valmiki's Ramayana.



**Burmese dance depicting Ramayana**

# China



In the Yunnan province of China, Ramayana is called **Langka Sip Hor** (written in Tai Lü language). It has borrowed many Sanskrit and Pali words and affixes.

**Buddhists took Ramayana to China in the first century AD.** The names are distorted as Lomo (Rama), Poloto (Bharata), Loman (Lakshman), Naloyen (Narayan). The **Pali Tripitaka** was rendered in



**Chinese dance depicting Ramayana**

**Chinese** and compiled in the name of **Taisho edition.**

Dasaratha Jataka and Story of Unnamed king were translated in 472 and 251 AD. Ravana was described as a wicked Naga King. **Dasaratha Jataka** has a verbatim Pali translation of Valmiki's Sanskrit sloka!

The Dai ethnic group of south-western **Yunnan province** also know the story as **Lanka Xihe (Ten heads of Lanka)**. The epic also spread to Tibet and Mongolia through Buddhism, with a **notable variant** being that it is **Bharata, and not Lakshmana, who accompanies Rama in exile.**



The **Khmer version of Ramayana** bears the name **Reamker (Ramakerti)**-literally means **“The Glory of Rama”**. Indeed, the story of Rama is present in both art and literature throughout the history of Cambodia.

**Reamker** is also mentioned in another literature called **L’berk Angkor Wat (“The Story of Angkor Wat”)** written in 1620 by Khmer author-**Pang Tat (or Nak Pang)**, celebrating the magnificent **temple complex of Angkor Wat** and describing the bas-reliefs in the temple galleries that **portray the Rama story**.

In 1900s, **Ta Krud** and **Ta Chak** were the two **old men** famous for their remarkable memory and ability to **narrate the whole Reamker story orally and beautifully with gesture**. In 1920, **Ta Chak** found voluminous manuscripts of Reamker story on **latanier leaves** in a pagoda south of **Angkor Wat temple** during his

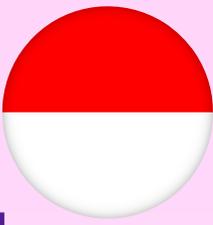


**Ramar, Lakshmana & Hanuman, Angkorwat temple**

monk-hood and he learnt to remember the script by heart. In 1969, **Ta Chak’s oral narration were recorded and his narration lasted 10 days at the rate of five hours per day!!**

Many versions of Reamker are available in Cambodia. Nowadays, **“Reamker”** is considered as **Cambodian national epic** which **plays significant role in Cambodian literature and extends to all Cambodian art forms, from sculpture to dance drama, painting and art**.

# Indonesia



In Indonesia, the **Ramayana** is a deeply ingrained aspect of the culture, especially among Javanese, Balinese and Sundanese people, and has become the source of moral and spiritual guidance as well as aesthetic expression and entertainment, for example in **Wayang** and traditional dances.

There are several Indonesian adaptations of Ramayana, including the Javanese “**Kakawin Ramayana**” and “**Balinese Ramakavaca**”.

***Kakawin Ramayana*** - It is believed to have been written in Central Java circa 870 AD during the reign of Mpu Sindok in the Medang Kingdom. The Javanese Kakawin Ramayana is based on Ravanavadha or the “Ravana massacre”, which is the sixth or seventh century poem by Indian poet Bhattikavya.

***Ramakavaca*** - Kakawin Ramayana was further developed on the neighboring island of Bali becoming the Balinese Ramakavaca. The bas-reliefs of **Ramayana** and **Krishnayana** scenes are carved on balustrades of the 9th century Prambanan temple in Yogyakarta, as well as in the 14th century Penataran temple in East Java.



**Manuscript of Ramayana, Indonesia**



**Ballet Dance of Ramayana,  
Java, Indonesia**

# Laos



In Laos, among Lao people, Ramayana is known as **“Phra Lak Phra Ram”**. Phra Lak Phra Ram is named after two principal characters, the brothers **Phra Lak, or Lakshaman, and Phra Ram, or Rama**. Phra Ram is considered the hero.

## **Wooden Carving of Ramayana, Laos**

This was introduced via the **first king of Lane Xang, Chao Fa Ngoum**, who arrived with his soldiers, artists, dancers, concubines, poets from musicians from Angkor who would have been familiar with the Reamker. Yet **Indic civilizations** knew of what is now **Yunnan in China**, as **“Gandhara”** no later than the **second century B.C.**

**Lao people venerate Hindu temples, often decorated in Ramayana and the Mahabharata motifs, such as at Vat Phou in Champassak.**

**Laos is the city of Lava, son of Rama as per the belief of the people of Laos. “Phra Lak Phra Ram” is the national epic of the country and is adapted from Valmiki’s Ramayana. There are still temples in Laos, that depict scenes of Ramayana!!**



**Ramayana in art form, Laos**



“**Hikayat Seri Rama**” is the Malay literary adaptation of the Hindu Ramayana epic in the form of a hikayat.

Folk versions of the Ramayana were told through **dance dramas** and by **penglipurlara** (professional storytellers). The **wayang kulit** (shadow theatre) adaptation, called **Hikayat Maharaja Wana**, was one of the most important shadow-plays.

Puppeteers would pick the **most exciting episodes** for their shows, particularly the scenes relating to the **marriage of Seri Rama**, the **abduction of Siti Dewi (Sita)**, the **final battles in Langkapuri (Lanka)**, and the heroine’s rescue by her husband.

Seri Rama means Vishnu’s incarnation and the eldest son of Dasaratha, SriRama. Siti Dewi means the Wife of Seri Rama and the adoptive daughter of Maharishi Kali.

Hikayat Seri Rama remains same as the original Sanskrit version Valmiki’s Ramayana except for the localisation of names of the characters.



## **PRESERVATION OF RAMAYANA IN MALAYSIA**

**Ramayana depicted as dance drama and shadow arts, Malaysia**

# Thailand



Here, Ramayana is told as a popular national epic **“Ramakien”**. Ramkien is based on the Buddhist Dasaratha Jataka, basically Thailand version of Ramayana. **Ramakien can be seen in an elaborate illustration at Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok.**

In Thailand, there is a city named **“Ayutthaya”** similar to **“Ayodhya”** in India and kings are called as **Rama I, Rama II, Rama III** etc.!!

**King Rama VI**, who shed light on Ramayana studies in Thailand, by tracing the sources of Ramkien, by comparing with Sanskrit epic Valmiki Ramayana, found that **Ramkien has its sources from 3 books of hinduism namely, Valmiki’s Ramayana, Vishnu Purana and Hanuman Nataka.**

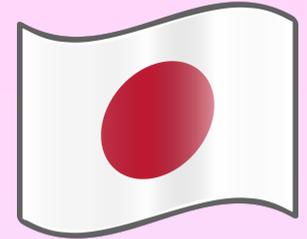
While the basic story is similar to that of Dasaratha Jataka, slight changes prevail. Basically the dress codes, weapons, topography etc are being described in Thai style.

**Looks like there were many versions of Ramekin but all were lost in the destruction of the city of Ayutthaya in 1767. Currently 3 versions prevail.**



**Hanuman on his chariot, a scene from War Phra Knew, Bangkok**

## Japan



The spread of Buddhism brought Ramayana to Japan where it came to be known as “**Ramaenna**” or “**Ramaensho**”.

Japanese Ramayana were written during the 10th century as “**Sambo Ekotoba**” and 12th century as “**Hobutsushu**” (Jewel Collection).

Bugaku and Gagaku dance styles of 8 to 12 century based on Indian classical dances are popular for depicting Japanese Ramayan.

## Philippines



Ramayana in Philippines is known as “**Maharadia Lawana**”. The famous dance of “**Singkil**” is inspired from Ramayana of the Philippines.



**Famous dance of Singkil,  
Philippines**

## South America

Ramayana teachings in South America tell the story of Hanuman traveling to Patala Loka (South America) through a tunnel in Madhya Pradesh while trying to rescue Rama and Lakshman who were kidnapped by Mahiravana, the step-brother of Ravana.

## Iraq



**A carving of human and ape talking, Iraq**

During archaeological excavations in Iraq, **6000-year old carvings of apes and men have been found in a cave chapel built in Silemania, Iraq.** The carvings resemble Warad Sin and Ram Sin of Larsa who ruled Mesopotamia for 60 years. **The Jataka tales also confirm that Lord Rama ruled his kingdom for 60 years.**

## Russia



The Kalmyks of Russia trace roots from Mongolia. In Mongolia, a commentary by Dmar-ston Chos-rgyal of Dbus commentates about the Ramayana in

**“Subhasitaratnanidhi”.**

**Russian researchers claim that Kaikeyi (Queen of Ayodhya) was from Russia and also that the Vedas were written in Arctic Russia.**

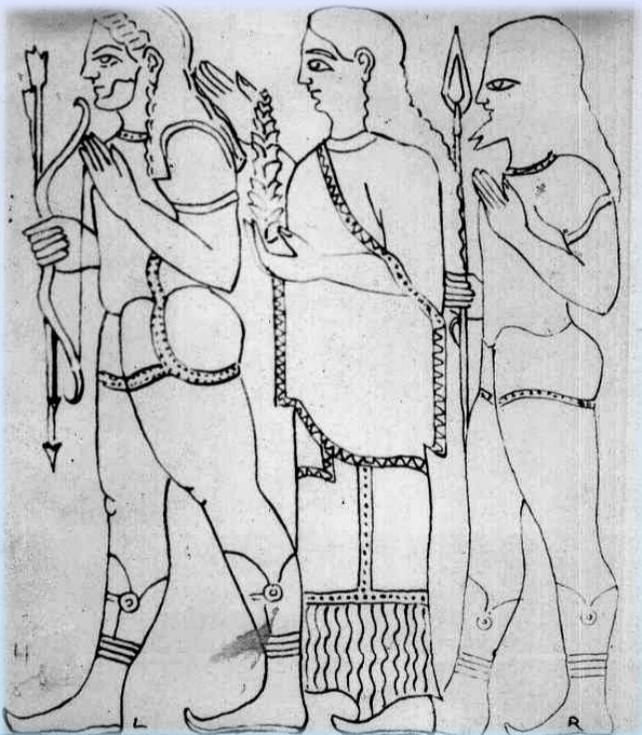


**RamLeela, a play at Russia**

## Italy

**Before the Roman civilisation, Italy was the home of advanced people known as Etruscans. The paintings, carvings, inscriptions that survived extensively match with Ramayana paintings, carvings, inscriptions in India. Looking this the archeologists are baffled about the reach of hinduism this far and wide to the west!!!**

**In some archaeological excavations, wall paintings in Italian houses from 7 BC depict scenes from the Ramayana such as many persons with tails and two men accompanied by a lady, and the men have bows and arrows on their shoulders.**



**A Etruscan portrait baffled the western historians and the match turns out to be Rama, Sita and Lakshmana walking in the forest!!**

## Ramayana in Buddhism

In Buddhism, **Ramayana** is known as “**Dasarata Jataka**” meaning **Tale of Dasarata (King Dashrath, father of Rama)**. It is claimed that **Buddha** came from the **Ikshvaku clan (of Rama)**.

The Dasharatha Jataka is one of the stories of the past lives of Buddha as a Bodhisattva.

**Rama** (called **Rāmapaṇḍita** in this version) was the son of **Kaushalya**, first wife of **Dasharatha**. **Lakṣmaṇa** (**Lakkhaṇa**) was a sibling of Rama and son of **Sumitra**, the second wife of **Dasharatha**. **Sita** was the wife of Rama. To protect his children from his wife **Kaikeyi**, who wished to promote her son **Bharata**, **Dasharatha** sent the three to a hermitage in the Himalayas for a twelve-year exile. After nine years, **Dasharatha** died and **Lakkhaṇa** and **Sita** returned; **Rāmapaṇḍita**, in deference to his father’s wishes, remained in exile for a further two years.

**Rāmapaṇḍita** is said to have been a previous incarnation of the Buddha, and **Sita** an incarnation of **Yasodharā**. **Ravana** appears in other Buddhist literature, the **Lankavatara Sutra**.



**A scene from  
Dasaratha Jataka**

## Ramayana in Jainism

Jains have two main versions of Ramayana. A Swetambara version and a Digambar version. The **Swetambara** version begins with **Vimala Suri's work Pauma Chariya** written in **Prakrit language in 1st century AD**. It has 118 cantos in Arya meter. The **Digambar version** begins with **Gunabhadra's Uttarapurana**. In all there are 15 books written and preserved by Jains relating to Ramayana. These books are written in three different languages, **Prakrit, Apbhransha and Sanskrit**.

Jain versions of the Ramayana can also be found in the various **Jain agamas like Ravisena's Padmapurana** (story of Padmaja and Rama, Padmaja being the name of Sita), **Hemacandra's Trisastisalakapurusa charitra** (hagiography of 63 illustrious persons), **Sanghadasa's Vasudevahindi and Uttarapurana by Gunabhadara**.

In Jain Ramayana, Rama, who led an upright life, renounces his kingdom after lakshman's death, becomes a Sanyasi and attains Kevala Jnana omniscience and finally liberation moksha.

In addition to these, **Ramayana characters have been referred directly and indirectly in several scriptures and stories**. For example, the story of **Sati Anjana Bala** (Hanuman's mother) describes the birth and strength of Hanuman as an infant child. It describes how Hanuman fell from the **Pushpak Vimaan** and landed on a rock, for Hanuman is alive and playing on a rock crushed by his fall.

# Conclusion

Now, we have travelled to almost all parts of the world through this document and learnt about how Ramayana is revered there. There might be modifications to the original story based on topography, language, religion etc. Still SriRama is SriRama!!! and that will never change.

In recent times China, Japan and many countries have started to include Ramayana in their school/university syllabus as a part of moral education. People in Japan believe that even a person who did a very big crime after listening to Ramayana multiple times becomes a good person!!!

An epic that took place in India is revered and being in taught in many countries is of course a pride to us!! Let's also start teaching our next generation Ramayana and make them responsible and a good human being. Let's teach that SriRama is our hero!!!

## References

1. <https://hinducouncil.com.au/new/ramayana-around-the-world/>
2. <http://lordrama.co.in/ramayana-in-different-parts-of-the-world.html>

## Disclaimer

The above said information was collected from internet by volunteers of Kinchitkaram Dharma Samsthapanam

!!!JAI SRI RAM!!!