



RAMAYANA IN TELUGU

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ABSTRACT

Ramayana is the story known to each household in this country. It's a story of an ideal king Rama, God incarnated on earth to propagate righteous behavior. It is not exaggeration to say that there is neither a village in India that does not host a temple for Rama, nor anyone auspicious task or mission is started without writing Sri Rama at the beginning. Ramayana is so popular in India that each of the character is well known to all the people in this country.

KEYWORDS: Lord Brahma , literary histories , walks of life.

INTRODUCTION

Ramayana started as a song sung by Kusilavas (folk singers), became a master piece of literature in the hands of Sage Valmiki. Sage Narada, hearing the story of Rama from Lord Brahma, narrated it to Sage Valmiki. Sage Valmiki narrated it so lucidly that in later times it became an idol for all the poets in different languages in this vast country. Almost all the literary histories of regional languages start either with translation of Ramayana, or created literary works inspired by the Ramayana. In Sanskrit itself, we can see more than 25 Ramayanas in poetry form. Kamil Bulke, research scholar on Ramayana, identified more than 300 Ramayanas in Indian languages in poetry. The number of literary works in different literary formats like drama was not added to this figure. If we count them on, then the number of literary works based on the story of Rama crosses the thousand mark. If the Ramayana based literature in performing and tribal art forms added, this figure even crosses the five thousand mark.

Rama in Ramayana is a complete man. Like any other normal being, he led life with all emotions. He tasted happiness and even faced the wrath of the time. His life gives many messages to us on how to follow dharma in different walks of life. Telugus, the people of present-day Andhra Pradesh and Telangana absorbed the life and teachings of Rama and Ramayana in their lives and thoughts and sang Ramayana in their own style in different literary genres. Almost all the literary genres of Telugu language have one or more Ramayana works of its own unique expression. Though majority of the works followed the story line of Valmiki Ramayana, they were full of innovative scenes as per the creativity of the authors. While literates created Ramayana in regular genres of literature, the folk and the tribals created songs on Ramayana. Rama Rama (Oh my God), Ayyo Rama (Alas!) were few of the expressions of Telugus in daily life.

Kudakonda Ramayana, Sarada Ramayana, Dharmapuri Ramayana, Ramakatha Sudharnavam, Samkshepa Ramayanam, Srirama dandamulu, Lanka Sarathy, Ramayana Gobbipata, Sri Rama javili, Mokshagunda Ramayanam, Chitti Ramayanam, Guttenadivi Ramayanam, Sukshma Ramayanam, Adavi Govinda namalu, Santa Govinda namalu, Pendli Govinda namalu, Setu Govinda namalu were few of the oral Ramayana works in high popularity in Telugu. Santha Kalyanam (marriage of Santha), Putrakameshti (sacrifice for children), Kousalya Vevillu (qualmishness of Kousalya), Sriramula Uggupata



(Nourishment of Sri Rama), Raghava Kalyanam (marriage of Raghava), Ramula vari Aluka (huff of Sri Rama), Sundarakanda padam (song of Sundarakanda), Rushula Asramam (hermitage of sages), Sugriva vijayam (victory of Sugriva), Kovala Rayabaram (Emissary), Angada Rayabaram (Emissary of angada), Lakshmana Murcha (fainting of Lakshmana), Lanka yagam (sacrifice at Lanka), Guha Bharatula Agni Pravesam (Guha and Bharata entering into fire), Sri Rama Pattabhishekam (coronation of Sri Rama), Lashmana Devara Navvu (Laugh of Lord Lakshmana), Urmiladevi nidra (sleep of Urmila Devi), Kusalayakam (Kusa and Lava), Kusa Lava Charitra (Story of Kusa and Lava), Kusa Lava Yudham (War of Kusa and Lava), Patalahomam (Sacrifice at nether world), Satakanta Ramayanam, Sita Vijayam (Victory of Sita) are few of the noted folk ballads in Telugu, sung devotedly by nannies and grannies in rural pockets of Telugu land.

Telugus own Sita as their daughter. Hence, many folk ballads were created centering Sita. Sita puttuka (birth of Sita), Sita Kalyanam (marriage of Sita), Sitanu attavarintiki panputa (sending Sita to in-laws' house), Sita Samarta (puberty of Sita), Sita vamanaguntal (sita playing vamanaguntalu), Sitammavari alukalu (huffs of Sita), Sita Vasantam (Sita playing Vansantotsava), Sita dagilimutalu (hide and seek game of Sita), Sita melukolupu (morning awakening of Sita), Sita Vevillu (qualmishness of Sita) were few of Sita centered songs popular for centuries in rural Telugu land. Many of these were based on Sita's character depicted in Buddhist and Jain Ramayanas. These narrate the different roles played by Sita and different aspects of Sita's life in Ramayana. Sita enacting her role of a daughter-in-law, her respect towards elders, love towards young, her witty punches, her relation with Santa, the sister of Rama, her mingling co-sisters-in-law, her happiness and woes, her inspiring character etc., got new beauty in folk ballads of Telugu people. Being in a lucid and simple language to sing, these folk ballads on Ramayana attained a permanency in Telugu culture. These beautiful episodes flowed like a stream from generation to generation like a heritage through nannies and grannies.

Telugus believe that Rama and Siva lived in Telugu area during their exile. For them Rama and Sita are their own relatives. Hence, the story of Ramayana flourished in Telugu literature in every of the genre. Poets of Telugu land were not lagging being in owning Ramayana. In metrical poem they described Ramayana in their heartiest passion. Many Dramas, Yakshaganas, Harikathas, Burrakathas, dance ballads etc. were created in Telugu based on different episodes of Ramayana. It is not an exaggeration to state that Telugu is the only language which has more Ramayana based literary and folk works when compared with any other regional language in India. More than 85 poetical works, 61 folk Ramayanas are till date enumerated making a it the language with more Ramayana works, numbering to 146. If the works created by less known poets, the count crosses the 300 mark. The number of Ramayanas in other Indian languages is as follows- Prakrit 12, Tamil 24, Kannada 40, Malayalam 11, Bangla 10, Assami 22, Hindi 57, Odiya 23, Marathi 13, Gujarati 32, Kashmiri 10, Urdu 6, Parsi 11, Punjabi 14, Nepali 11, Nepali 11.

In Telugu, Tikkana, one of the poets of Mahabharata in Telugu, created Nirvachanottara Ramayana for the first time. Errana, third poet of first classical work of Telugu, Mahabharata incorporated the story of Ramayana into the Aranya Parva of Mahabharata while writing it. Pothana, though Ramayana is not a part of Bhagavatam, with fondness on it, inserted it in the ninth canto of Bhagavatam. Ponniganti Telaganna, the author of first Chaste Telugu classic Yayati Charitra, incorporated Ramayana in his work, finding a place to insert it. While describing the Dasavataras of Vishnu, he narrated the story of Ramayana in detail. All these became famous as Upakhyaana Ramayanas (Ramayana in episodes). Gona Buddha Reddy, the author of the first Ramayana in Telugu narrated the story of Ramayana in desi poetry genre. The classic style Ramayana for the first time was created by Bhaskara titling Bhaskara Ramayanam. Later Molla became the first poetess to write a Telugu Ramayana. Kuchimanchi Teimmana (Achcha Telugu Ramayanam), Allayaraju Ramabhaddra (Ramabhyudayam), Katta Varadaraju (Varadaraja Ramayanam), Raghunatha (Raghunatha Ramayanam), Venkata kavi (Gopinatha Ramayanam) followed the suit.

In the modern phase of Telugu literature Vasudasa Swamy,(Ramayana mandaram), Tadepalli Venkatappayya (Srirama Kathamrutam), Sripada Krishnamurthy Sastry (Sri Krishna Ramayanam), Atmakuri Govindacharya (Govinda Ramayanam), Subradamba (Subhadra Ramayanam), Chebrolu Saraswati (Saraswati

Ramayanam), Rangayya kavi (Ramodayam), Ghattu Venkararamakrishna kavi (Pattabhi Ramayanam), Puttuparthi Narayanacharyulu (Janapriya Ramayanam) wrote Ramayanas. Viswanatha Satyanarayana was honoured with Jnanapeeth Award for his Ramayana Kalpavriksham.

Apart from writing Ramayanas in Telugu, many poets translated the Sanskrit Ramayanas into Telugu. Champu Ramayana of Bhojadeva was translated by many poets like Venkata Chalapati, Allamraju Rangasai, Bulusu Sitarama kavi, Pusapati Ranganayaja, Jayanthi Ramayya, Buddharavapu Mahadeva. Janaki Parinaya was translated by Seshakavi as Sri Sessa Ramayanam, a classic poem. Ananda Ramayana was translated as a classic poem by Lakshmana Kavi and as a prose work by Pera Raju. Soma, the ruler of Gadwal, got the Valmiki Ramayana translated into Yatha Sloka Tatparya Ramayana (Ramayana with meaning of each sloka as it is) by a group of six poets in his court.

Ramayana though originated and popular in northern India, by all the Ramayana poets in Telugu, it got the Telugu flavour. Though the culture of the poem was north Indian, new to the South Indian region, the Telugu traditions and customs found place in their works. This transformation shows that the message of Ramayana is universal.

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