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RAMAYANA IN MAHABHARATA

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Abstract

Ramayana and Mahabharata are two epics that have influenced Indian literature. Both epics narrate the story of Prince Rama and his journey to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana. In both epics, the dharma, or moral duty, is a recurring theme. The concept of moral duty is explored and examined in various literary works, contributing to the richness and diversity of India's literature. In addition, their virtues and flaws are explored in various literature works. In order to understand the significance of these two epic works, it is important to examine their historical and cultural context.

Keywords

Ramayana, Mahabharata, Epic, Rama, Dharma

INTRODUCTION

Ramayana and Mahabharata, two of India's greatest epics, have ancient roots. Many theories surround these epics' authorship and composition.

Legend has it that Valmiki wrote Ramayana around 500 BCE. It follows Prince Rama's rescue of Sita from Ravana. The poem-like epic tackles responsibility, honour, and virtue triumphing over evil. However, Mahabharata authorship is complicated. The epic has been added to and revised over the

ages, but Vyasa is credited with writing it. Our current version was produced approximately 300 CE, whereas the earliest was penned around 400 BCE. Mahabharata describes the Kuru dynasty and the Pandavas-Kauravas fight

The historical and cultural background of Ramayana and Mahabharata is crucial to understanding their relevance. Epics represent old Indian ideals, beliefs, and customs. Ramayana takes place in the Treta Yuga, a time of noble monarchs and honour and justice. However, Mahabharata takes place in the Dwapara Yuga, a time of moral deterioration and conflict. Both epics reveal ancient Indian politics, religion, and society. They illuminate the caste structure, women's roles, and moral difficulties of the time.

Ramayana and Mahabharata have inspired many Indian writers and poets. Many Indian compositions reflect these epics' ideas and elements. Ramayana and Mahabharata emphasise morality, or dharma. Numerous Indian literary works across languages and time eras have explored righteous behavior and obligation. These epics also explore love, loyalty, sacrifice, and human connections. Modern Indian literature reimagines them and appeals to modern readers.

Ramayana and Mahabharata characters are Indian literary archetypes. Examples include Prince Rama, Sita, Hanuman, and the Pandavas, who were flawed but honorable. Generations of writers are inspired by these characters. Their



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qualities and shortcomings are explored in numerous literary works, enriching Indian literature. Powerful female characters like Sita, Draupadi, and Kunti defy gender stereotypes and allow Indian literature to explore women's agency and empowerment.

Since Mahabharata contains Rama's narrative, Ramayana predates it. Rama Upakhya Parva (Chapters 272-291) of Draupadi Harana Parva of Vana Parva contains Mahabharata's Rama narrative. In Bhadarkar Series Sanskrit Mahabharata, this chapter is 256–272. In this parva, Ramayana is briefly summarised to soothe Yudhishtira, who laments his brothers' long exile. Pandavas are exiled to the wilderness. Jayadratha kidnaps Draupadi. The brothers rescue her, but Yudhishtira is unhappy by their predicament. Rushi Markandeya tells Yuddhishtira about another great king who was exiled in the wilderness and lost his wife but found her to cheer him up. It would have been pointless to ruin the happy conclusion.

Summary of Ramopakhyana

Sage Markandeya stated Rama underwent unimaginable suffering when Ravana took Sita from his forests refuge. Rama and Sugriva brought her back, building a bridge over the sea and destroying Lanka with their sharp arrows. Yudhishtira then asked about Rama and expressed interest in hearing his story. श्रोतुमिच्छामि चरितं रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः¹ Then Markandeya told him about Rama. From Ikshwaku came a great king named Aja. His son Dasaratha was pure and studied the Vedas. Dasaratha had four moral and profitable sons: Rama, Lakshmana, Satrugna, and Bharata. Kausalya and Kaikeyi were Rama and Bharata's mothers. Sumitra fathered Lakshmana and Satrugna. King Janaka ruled Videha, and Sita was his daughter. Tashtri designed her to be Rama's cherished wife.

विदेहराजो जनकः सीता तस्यात्मजा विभो ।

यां चकार स्वयं त्वष्टा रामस्य महिषीं प्रियाम्॥

Prajapathi Pulastya's son Vaisravana is powerful. Kubera, Vaisravana's son, knew his father was furious. Kubera sent three Rakshasa ladies to serve his father to please him. They were Pushpotkata, Raka, Malini. This trio was talented in singing and dancing and constantly focused on Vaisravana. The sage handed each lady princely sons according to their wishes, pleased with their services. Pushpotkata had Kumbhakarna and Ten-headed Ravana.

पुष्पोत्कटायां जज्ञाते द्वौ पुत्रौ राक्षसेश्वरौ

कुम्भकर्णदशग्रीवौ बलेनाप्रतिमौ भुवि ॥

Vibhishana was Malini's son, Khara and Surpanakha were Raka's. But Ravana, with ten heads, was first. He was strong, energetic, and religious.

दशग्रीवस्तु सर्वेषां ज्येष्ठो राक्षसपुङ्गवः

महोत्साहो महावीर्यो महासत्त्वपराक्रमः॥

The brothers performed penances out of envy over Kubera. Brahma was pleased by their austere asceticism. Ravana stood on one leg for a thousand years, supported by air alone, surrounded by the five sacred fires, and meditating. His brothers repented with him. Ravana cut off his own heads and presented them to the sacred fire after a thousand years. Lord Brahma appeared during this deed. He advised them to seek a blessing other than immortality. Ravana asked Brahma

गन्धर्वदेवासुरतो यक्षराक्षसतस्तथा ।

सर्पकिंनरभूतेभ्यो न मे भूयात्पराभवः॥

May I never lose to Gandharvas, Celestials, Kinnaras, Asuras, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Serpents, and other creatures. Brahma granted the boon. Kumbhakarna begged for lengthy slumber, whereas Vibhishana asked for the boon that would keep him righteous even in danger. Brahma disappeared after blessing them. Rakshasa vanquished Kubera and took Lanka



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after receiving boons. Ravana brutally grabbed Pushpaka, his celestial chariot.

Vibhishana, following Kuvera's path of virtue and fame, became Yaksha and Raksha host commander. However, the mighty Rakshasas and Pisachas overwhelmingly chose Ravana as their king. Ravana, who could take any form and fly, attacked the gods and Daityas and stole their valuables. Siddhas and Devarshis sought Brahma's protection after Ravana Brahmarshis' misdeeds. Brahma promised them Lord Vishnu had become human to destroy Ravana.

तदर्थमवतीर्णोऽसौ मन्त्रियोगाच्चतुर्भुजः।

विष्णुः प्रहरतां श्रेष्ठः स कर्मैतत्करिष्यति॥

He ordered the Devas and others to become monkeys and bears to aid Vishnu in defeating Ravana. The gods, Gandharvas, and Danavas soon had children with the top monkeys and bears. The boys matched their dad in strength and glory.

King Dasaratha was thrilled when Rama and his other three sons were born. These children got stronger and learned the Vedas, their mysteries, and weaponry science. After the Brahmacharya Ashram, the princes married. Rama, the oldest, was his father's smartest and favourite. His attractive ways charmed everyone.

Dasaratha, growing older, consulted his ministers and spiritual adviser about placing Rama as regent. All those great ministers decided it was time. After hearing the king's comments, Kaikeyi's maid Manthara went to her mistress and responded appropriately. She misled Kaikeyi, the queen. Kaikeyi donned her clothes and went to find her spouse after hearing her maid's statements. She made him recollect her prior favours. She requested that he appoint Bharata as king and exile Rama to Dandaka for fourteen years as an ascetic. These remarks left the king stunned.

After discovering that his father had been asked, the great and virtuous Rama went into the wilderness to protect the king's truth. His brother Lakshmana and wife Sita followed. After Rama entered the wilderness, Dasaratha left him. Kaikeyi asked Bharata to take state responsibilities, but he declined. He sought Rama to return him. He saw Rama and Lakshmana in Chitrakuta's mountains. Rama fired Bharata, determined to follow his father's orders. After returning, Bharata controlled Nandigrama with his brother's wooden sandals. Rama entered the big forest to Sarabhanganga for dread of another Ayodhya invasion. He reached the Dandaka jungle and settled on the Godavari after paying his respects to Sarabhanganga.

In Janasthana, under the ascetics' protection, Rama slaughtered 14,000 Rakshasas, including Khara and Dushana. Surpanakha, with disfigured nose and lips, returned to Ravana's Lanka after these Rakshasas were killed. Ravana saw Surpanakha, grieving and bloody, and she fell at his feet. He learned about Rama's victory over Khara and Dushana from her. Ravana confronted Maricha for killing Rama after learning of his families' deaths. Maricha warned Ravana of Rama's might. Maricha agreed to entice Sita by becoming a deer with golden horns and skin when Ravana demanded help.

Maricha arrived before Sita as a golden deer as planned. She chased Rama after that deer by chance. To please her, Rama hurriedly after the deer, leaving Lakshmana to defend her. Maricha lured Rama far away by appearing and disappearing. Maricha imitated Rama's voice and screamed out for Sita and Lakshmana when hit by Rama's arrow. Sita advised Lakshmana to run to the cry's source. Lakshmana was forced to go to find Rama after he tried to convince her of the demon's magic. Ravana appeared to Sita in a gentlemanly manner. He disguised himself as a hermit. Sita offered him fruits, root, and a seat. Ravana lifted her by her hair and flew. On a mountain high,



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a big vulture named Jatayu saw the hapless lady crying and screaming for Rama while being carried away by Ravana.

तां ददर्श तदा गृध्रो जटायुर्गिरिगोचरः

रुदतीं राम रामेति ह्रियमाणां तपस्विनीम्⁷

Jatayu was Dasaratha's pal. When Ravana seized Sita, Jatayu raged and told him to leave. Jatayu was tearing Ravana with his talons. Using his wings and beaks, he mangled him in 100 places. The two Jatayu wings were chopped off by Ravana with a sword. At every ascetic asylum, lake, river, or tank she saw throughout the abduction, Sita tossed down an ornament.

Rama retraced his ways and spotted Lakshmana as Sita was taken. They passed Jatayu on their way back. Rama heard Jatayu's Sita abduction story. Rama and Lakshmana sought Sita. Travelling south, they saw a decapitated Kabanda. Lakshmana killed him. A celestial figure emerged from the Rakshasa. He told Rama and Lakshmana about Ravana and Lanka. He suggested meeting Sugriva, the Rishyamuka peak monkey king.

Rama approached Rishyamuka as advised. As they approached, Sugriva dispatched his wise advisor Hanuman to greet them. After talking to Hanuman, the brothers approached Sugriva. Rama befriended Sugriva. Rama promised to defeat Vali and install Sugriva. Sugriva offered Sita search assistance. They travelled to Kishkindhya with complete trust. At Kishkindhya, Sugriva challenged Vali to a dual fight. Sugriva and Vali hurried to the fight. While fighting, Rama couldn't help Sugriva because he couldn't tell them apart. Hanuman put a flower garland around Sugriva's neck. Rama took his bows and fired at Vali in the second dual fight after seeing Sugriva's gesture. Rama murdered Vali.

Ravana placed Sita in an Asokavana, the jungle home. Sita suffered there, eating on fruits and roots, fasting, wearing austere clothes, and withering thin, thinking of her absent lord.

Ravana appointed several Rakshasa women with bearded darts, swords, lances, battle-axes, maces, and burning brands to defend her. Ravana approached her, plagued by the god of desire's shafts. Inflamed by desire, Ravana tried to impress Sita, but she ignored him.

Rama watched time passing at Malyavat Hill with Sugriva. An angry Lakshmana cautioned Sugriva of the implications of the Sita search delay. Sugriva despatched his troops to find Sita after hearing Rama's comments from Lakshmana.

Other monkeys moved in different directions, but the south returned. They returned and told Rama they had searched the world but couldn't find Sita. The southbound group returned happy after two months. This led Sugriva and Rama to believe Sita was seen. Hanuman and the monkeys faced Sugriva. Hanuman's walk and face colour convinced Rama that he had seen Sita. Hanuman notified Rama of Sita's good news. Hanuman recounted how they crossed the ocean to see Sita in Lanka. He said Sampati, Jatayu's brother, told them about Lanka. Hanuman told Rama he told Sita about Rama and Lakshmana at Sugriva. He gave Rama Sita's gem. He told Rama he was seized by Ravana's men and burned Lanka.

Different monkey armies from different directions met at Kishkindhya to march on Lanka. They gathered in droves to help Rama. Rama and Sugriva headed out for fight with Ravana in a favourable moment after the monkeys had gathered from all directions. After crossing healthy valleys, the monkey host reached the briny sea. In a vision, the Lord of the Ocean advised Rama to utilise Nala to build an ocean bridge. Rama had Nala build the bridge.

Vibhishana, Ravana's brother, and his advisors visited Rama. Rama appointed Vibhishana king of all Rakshasas and made him his junior counsellor and Lakshmana's companion.



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Vibhishana led troops into Lanka. Rama then despatched the wise Vanara Prince Angada to Ravana. The journey of Angada failed. War was proclaimed by Rama. The ramparts of Lanka were broken by his combined attack. Rakshasas and Vanaras fought a devastating war. Many killed on both sides. Battle killed Kumbhakarna and Indrajit. Ravana into battle at the conclusion. He killed many monkeys in violent combat.

Ravana was pursued by Rama in Indra's chariot. Ravana and Rama fought fiercely. Indeed, their fight is unique. Rama fired Brahmastra, a powerful weapon that would kill Ravana. Ravana died from Brahmastra's blow. After defeating Ravana, Rama gave Vibhishana Lanka. Sita spent time with Ravana, thus Rama rejected her. Sita entered the fire for a test, but a voice from the sky declared her innocent. Rama returned to Ayodhya with Sita.

During his narrating of the Ramayana to Yudhishtira, Markandeya detailed the immense tragedy that the incredibly energetic Rama had endured as a result of his solitude in the forest. In the midst of disaster, he urged Yudhishtira to fight his enemies.

Ramopakhyana vs Valmiki Ramayana

1. There are twenty-four thousand stanzas in the Valmiki Ramayana, while there are only seven hundred in the Mahabharata's Ramopakhyanam of Vanaparva.
2. The Ramopakhyana is divided into twenty adhyayas, whereas the Valmiki Ramayana includes seven kandas. Ramopakhyana, like the Valmiki Ramayana, does not adhere to an appropriate division of kanda according to the plot. Twenty adhyayas, or 700 stanzas, make up the running tale.
3. Contrary to what is said in the Valmiki Ramayana, the Putra Kama Ishti is not described in the Ramopakhyana

of Vanaparva. The story begins with King Dasaratha's four offspring from his three wives in Ramopakhyana.

4. The birth of Ravana was described in greater detail in Ramopakhyana compared to the Valmiki Ramayana.
5. According to Ramopakhyana, the plot to force Rama into exile included the birth of a Gandharvi named Dundubhi as the hunchbacked Manthara. This part of the Ramayana was left out by Valmiki.
6. The Manthara of Ramopakhyana offers more straightforward guidance than the Valmiki Ramayana. She aroused Kaikeyi's jealousy with simple gestures and words. Ramopakhyana did not contain any veiled counsel or ornamented language.
7. Instead of Rama, Kaikeyi begs King Dasaratha to crown her son as king in Ramopakhyana. Ramopakhyana lacked any dramatic aspects.
8. In Ramopakhyana Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana merely depart from the palace. In the Valmiki Ramayana, this scene is extensively described.
9. Even though his mother sent Rama into exile and begged for the kingdom on his behalf, Bharata does not curse her in Ramopakhyana. All he does is force her to admit that she was wrong. There aren't many foul words used, but when they are, they usually describe a greedy person—not just Kaikeyi.
10. In Ramopakhyana, the events of Bharata approaching Rama, Rama turning down Bharata's desire to return, and Bharata placing Rama's wooden sandals on the throne are described in short.
11. Ramopakhyana does not have the story of Guhaka, the boatman.
12. In contrast to the Valmiki Ramayana, Ramopakhyana depicts Rama as relatively silent following Sita's



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kidnapping. In the Ramayana by Valmiki, Rama passes out and sobs uncontrollably at every thought of Sita. Here, Rama of Ramopakhyana displays greater composure than Rama of Valmiki.

13. Ramopakhyana condenses the episode where Hanuman meets Rama and Lakshmana into a few of stanzas, in contrast to the identical scenario in Valmiki Ramayana.
14. Ramopakhyana also condensed the tale of Vali and Sugriva compared to the Valmiki Ramayana.
15. Vali Vadha's part in Ramopakhyana is straightforward, devoid of Tara's emotional collapse. In their duel, Rama first misses Sugriva, but in the second round, he sees him thanks to the garland and uses a single arrow to kill Vali. The Ramayana by Valmiki describes the same scene at length.
16. The Valmiki Ramayana, which has 68 chapters of Sundara kanda, is condensed into just 15 stanzas in Ramopakhyana. The events described in Sundara kanda, such as jumping from Mahendra giri, stopping on Mainaka, fighting Simhika, and fighting Lankini, were omitted in Ramopakhyana. In these fifteen stanzas, Hanuman only recounts his actions in Lanka.
17. The Ramopakhyana only devotes seven chapters to the Rama and Ravana fight, but the Valmiki Ramayana devotes one hundred and twenty-eight chapters to the same subject in a whole kanda (yuddha kanda).

18. In Ramopakhyanam, the entire Uttara kanda is not discussed.

Thus, the Mahabharata re-narrates the story of Rama, short in length and with few differences.

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