

# THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE- RAMLILA



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REAMKER

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# SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Cultural heritage plays a very important role in our life and keeps us attached to our religion, traditions, and beliefs.
- It is the duty of our society to preserve our cultural heritage.
- The main foundation of every country and every society is its culture.
- It can play an essential role in our society by linking the past, the present and the future generation, a basis for building a strong nation and national identity.





# SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Cultural heritage gives people a connection to certain social values, beliefs, religions and customs.
- It represents our history and our identity, our bond to the past, to our present and the future.
- An intangible heritage is particularly difficult to protect as it is only experienced and cannot be kept in a sheltered place to be guarded.
- For instance, speaking our language helps us to preserve our ethno-linguistic identity. Not using our language could certainly cause it to perish.
- The best way to preserve a heritage is to use them as





# RAMLILA

*Ramlila* is a compound of Sanskrit words "Rama" (seventh Vishnu [avatar](#)) and "Lila" (play) meaning Rama's play.

The Ramlila is the story of Hindu god Rama from his birth.

Organised in numerous villages, towns and neighbourhoods during the autumn Navratri festival season which typically falls in September or October.

The Ramlila festivities were declared by [UNESCO](#) as one of the "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" in 2008.







## एक श्लोकी रामायण

आदौ राम तपोवनादि गमनं, हत्वा मृगं कांचनम्।  
वैदेहीहरणं जटायुमरणं, सुग्रीवसंभाषणम्॥  
बालीनिर्दलनं समुद्रतरणं, लंकापुरीदाहनम्।  
पश्चाद् रावण कुंभकर्ण हननम्, ऐतद्धि रामायणम्।



# PERFORMING THE RAMLILA

## Dialogues

- Mostly are used in the form of *Chaupaiys* — quatrain verse of Indian poetry.

## Acting

- Usually, the actors in Ramleela are multi-talented while acting they have sung with coordinating it with the taals which is still considered as the most complicated in the field of theatre

## Set-up

- Traditionally organised in a makeshift open-air theatre at night, it is usually staged by amateur acting teams drawn from all segments of the society

## Music

- Singers and musicians, men and women, elderly and youth play different parts, sing the verses to music, recite dialogues.



# EVOLUTION OF RAMLEELA

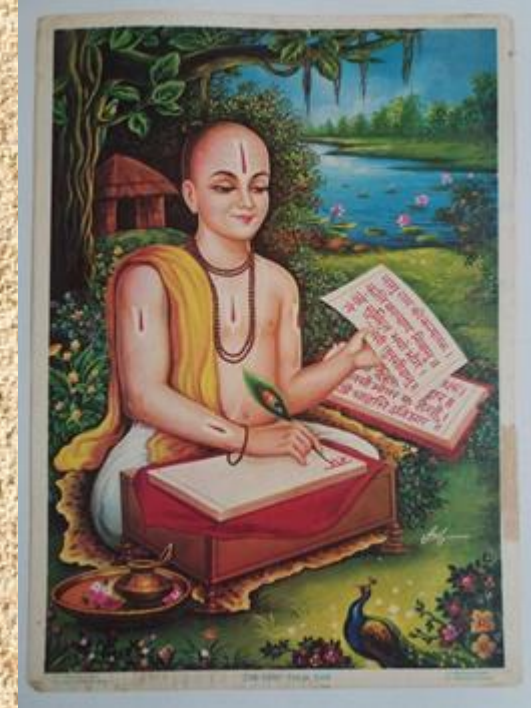
Most Ramlilas in North India are based on the 16th-century secondary work on Ramayana, [\*Ramcharitmanas\*](#) by [\*Tulsidas\*](#).

It is said that his student Megha Bhagat started the *Ramcharitmanas*-based Ramlila in 1625.

Ramlila is likely an ancient tradition of India because it is generally accepted by scholars that written manuscripts emerged later in Indian religions, and ancient texts were largely a product of oral tradition.

All ancient epics of India have been recited and transmitted by bards and students in Ramlila-like manner, verbally from one generation to another, and preserved by rules of acting.

Later on, open-air productions were staged by local Ramlila committees (*Samitis*), and funded entirely by the villagers or local neighbourhoods in urban areas.





# RAMLILA BEYOND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS

While many important characters are played by Muslims, they too stay with others all the days it goes into staging this show. They remain detached from the family under the protection of Ramlila Samiti during this period.

Muslims have also been involved in making costumes for the characters, doing the stagework and designing the tableaux for the traditional SAVARIS.

A Muslim family in Lucknow has been organising Ramleela for three generations in the city's Bakshi Ka Talab area. Spreading a message of communal harmony, this Ramleela was started back in 1972.

The Ramlila of Jalaun has entered its 183rd year and it's why United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, is taking interest in it.





# RAMNAGAR RAMLILA

The tradition of staging the Ramlila at Ramnagar, Varanasi, which lies across the Ganges river from the Hindu pilgrimage city of Varanasi.

Over 200 years old, the tradition started in 1830 and is a 31-day event famous for having lavish sets, decoration and dialogues.

Presented against the backdrop of Ramnagar fort, under an open sky and set with traditional lamps, this iconic Ramlila draws a crowd of upto 100,000.

On the day after Dussehra, Varanasi also celebrates the Bharat Milaap festival, when Ram's return to Ayodhya and reunited with his younger brother Bharat.





# RAMLILA AT CHITRAKOOT GROUND

- The Chitrakoot ground is where the earliest known Ramlila is believed to have started 480 years ago.
- Ramayanis read out the Ramcharitmanas to the beat of drums.
- The swaroops enact the scenes silently.
- Families have been participating from generations.
- Muslims are also involved as incharge of fireworks, playing drums and makeup artists.





# DELHI KI RAMLILA

- Ramlilas began in Delhi 350 years ago, when Mughal king Shahjahan built Shahjahanabad.
- Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar started the concept of Ramlila Savari when he occupied the throne of Delhi sometime in 1830s.
- Ramlila at Yamuna banks behind Lal Quila was meant for the city residents and also for the royal family.
- After the fall of Mughal Empire, the Ramlilas committees were run with the help of donations.





# RAMLILA OUTSIDE INDIA

- **Trinidad & Tobago**
- Ramlila entered into the twin-island country when indentured immigrants were brought into the country from India 1845.
- The earliest record of Ramlila celebration in Trinidad goes back to 1881 in Dow Village.
- Recently, in 2012, 'The National Ramlila Council of Trinidad and Tobago'(NRCTT) was made into the main representative body for Ramlila through an act of Parliament.





# CAMBODIA

- Cambodia has its own version of Ramayana called 'Reamker', wherein Lord Rama is known as 'Preah Ream', Sita as 'Neang Seda', and Lakshman as 'Preah Leak'.
- Reamker is the most popular Khmer literature and its influence extends to art, dance, and theater.
- The Cambodian Ramlila is based on Reamker, which is again based on Valmiki Ramayana.





# Thailand

- Thailand's national epic is '**Ramakien**', which is a version of Ramayana adopted from Valmiki, but has an influence of Indian vernacular versions as well.
- Ramakein has been adopted into widely adopted into art and theater.
- Thailand has a rich culture of Ramlila of its own.





# MYANMAR

- Myanmar's unofficial national epic called '**Yama Zatdaw**' is the Myanmar version of Ramayana.
- Zatdaw literally means 'acted play' and Yama refers to Rama. The oral tradition of Ramayana is believed to have been introduced into Myanmar in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE.
- Yama Zatdaw plays a very important role in Burmese arts, literature, culture, and tradition.





- Suriname
- Hindus are second largest religious group in Suriname and comprise around 22.3% of the total population.
- Ramlila was introduced by the Indian immigrants around 150 years ago

- Indonesia
- A popular adage in Indonesia goes: "Islam is our religion. Ramayana is our culture." Indonesians follow an old Javanese version of Ramayana written in around 9<sup>th</sup> century called 'Kakawin Ramayan'.
- It has a lively and rich tradition of Ramlila.

- Mauritius
- . Mauritius has a very vibrant and long tradition of Ramlila performance.
- Famous for its Ramayana singing on Jhal and Dholak.
- Mauritius also hosted the International Ramayana Conference.

- Fiji
- Fiji has a rich tradition of Ramayana going back to around 130 years.
- Every settlement have their own 'Ramayana Mandalis' that preserve and transmit the culture and values of Ramayana.



# CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL AGE

- The development of mass media, particularly television soap operas, is leading to a reduction in the audience of the Ramlila plays, which are therefore losing their principal role of bringing people and communities together.
- The families associated with this annual procession are losing the employment opportunities.
- The smaller Ramlila committees don't get enough funds while the major committees are still flourishing.
- The local art and culture is vanishing and the artists are bound to discontinue the art.



# EFFORTS TO REVIVE RAMLILA

- International Ramayan Festival is being organized in India during which several countries have participated with their artists.
- In 2020, Ramlila in Ayodhya in Lakshman Quila was started in association with Min of Culture and was broadcasted in 14 languages.
- Delhi's Luv Kush Ramlila committee is organizing Ramlila with the Bollywood actors as cast so as to boost the public turnout.





# CONCLUSION

- Ramlila has been an important pillar of the communal harmony as it brings people of all castes, age and religion together.
- There is a need to promote the local traditions and ramlila of towns and committees through monetary help.
- After all, the culture of the land has to be preserved for the generations to come and keep the culture alive.
- There is a dire need that the ideals of Lord Rama and morals of Ramayana be penetrated through the young minds of our country through representation of Ramlila.



# THANK YOU

