

**VISUAL ARTISTIC APPROACH OF RAM-LEELA
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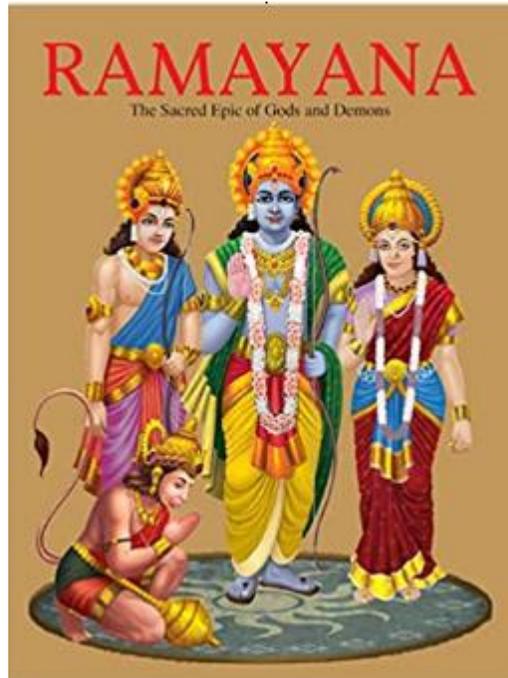
ABSTRACT

Ramlila is a theatrical folk re-enactment of the life of Rama as described in the ancient Hindu epic Ramayana or secondary literature based on it, such as the Ramcharitmanas, that is performed in a public setting. Particularly noteworthy are hundreds of theatrical plays and dance performances, all of which are dedicated to the Hindu deity Rama, that are presented across India during the annual fall festival of Navratri. After the reenactment of the legendary battle between Good and Evil, the Ramlila celebrations culminate in the Dussehra (Dasara, Vijayadashami) night festivities, during which the giant grotesque effigies of Evil, such as the demon Ravana, are burned, typically with fireworks, to mark the end of the festival. It is Rama who seems to be the seventh manifestation of the Hindu deity Vishnu and the principal protagonist of the Ramayana, a Sanskrit epic that combines performing arts with storylines that are motivated by ethical ideas. The epic literature is believed to have been written in the first millennium BCE, and Ramlila is an adaption of the tales contained within it. In North India, most Ramlilas are based on Tulsidas's 16th-century secondary work on the Ramayana, Ramcharitmanas, which is a poem-form composition in the regional vernacular language (Awadhi, a dialect of Hindi), which is a verse form composition in the regional vernacular language. These poems are often used as dialogue in traditional versions of Shakespeare plays. Ramlila committees (Samitis) organise open-air performances, which are totally supported by the peasants or by the local neighbourhoods in metropolitan areas. However, although the core crew of performance artists prepares for the dance-drama, the real performance draws in unplanned players from the audience and the surrounding villages to take part. This art form is a component of Hindu culture, and it may be found in the worship of many gods and goddesses, but the worship of Rama, Durga (as Durga Puja), and Krishna (as Rasa lila) are the most popular and yearly events on the Indian subcontinent. Rama Puja is the most popular of these annual festivities.

Keywords: *Visual Artistic, Ram-Leela***INTRODUCTION**

Ramlila is a ceremonial custom of religious tableaux or short dramas that are performed in northern India during the birthday celebration of Prince Rama, the hero of the Ramayana epic and an incarnation of God Vishnu, which takes place between the months of September and October. The most important events in Rama's life may be reenacted as vigorous village theatre or as sketchy scenarios done by kid actors with the assistance of older men, depending on the circumstances. It is in Varanasi and its

environs that the most extravagant ramlila is held, where the scenes are split into a month's worth of performances and are staged in different places suitable to the topic of the specific scene being performed.



OBJECTIVE

1. Study on Visual artistic drama's.
2. Study on, Ram-Leela Events in Rama's Life.

HISTORY

A close connection exists between the Ramlila tradition and the Ramacharitmanas, a classic Hindi rendition of the Ramayana written by the poet Tulsidas (1523–1623). The Ramayana author Valmiki is said to have appeared in him and to have been a devotee of Rama. He was also a philosopher and a musician, and some believe that he was an incarnation of Valmiki.

The erudite Brahmans were outspoken in their opposition to Tulsidas' vernacular Ramayana. However, it quickly acquired widespread acceptance, especially in northern India. He was deeply influenced by Valmiki's Ramayana, and he constructed his own rendition of the storey that, although similar to the original, varies in certain points. Even during the period of Tulsidas, the recitation of the Ramayana was considered a devotional activity.

As part of the Rama celebration, Tulsidas' disciples performed the Ramacharitmanas, which were written after his death in 1623. The practise spread to other regions of the region, and the initially five-day performance soon evolved into a grandiose spectacle that might run up to one month in duration.



The Great Spectacle

Most large-scale ramlila spectacles consist of a number of stages on which various passages of the Ramayana are performed in real time at the same time. It is true that in Varanasi, numerous ramlilas may be conducted at the same time if the circumstances allow it. They are, however, scheduled to begin on separate days in order for viewers to be able to move freely between different performances according to their preferences.

The 30-day mega-performance at Varanasi is, without a question, the most magnificent of all ramlilas, and it is the most stunning of all. Every day, a new episode is broadcast at a specific place that corresponds to the episode being shown that day. It may take place along a river, in a public area, in woodland, or any other location you want.

Rich families from the city participate in the procession scenes during specific episodes, notably those depicting Rama's and Sita's wedding and Rama's homecoming. The masks are enormous, with Hanuman's copper mask weighing several kilos in its own right.

The sequence depicting Rama's homecoming and reunion with his siblings serves as the climax of this ramlila. As many as 300,000 onlookers clap their hands and toss flowers onto the podium, where Rama hugs his siblings, as they watch the ceremony. There is a moment of stillness amid the commotion, which acts as a type of temporary altar for the ecstatically worshipping masses of pilgrimage participants to offer their prayers.

Afterwards, the maharaja of Varanasi comes on his elephant as an emissary of God Shiva in order to see Rama, who is the avatar of the second major Hindu deity, Vishnu. The culmination of this one-month spiritual show is the burning of the enormous, firecracker-filled cardboard effigies of Ravana and Kumbakarna, which symbolises the ultimate triumph of good over evil and marks the conclusion of the festival.

Ramlila is one of a number of Hindu festivals that are associated with the performing arts. Ramayana epic is one of the earliest Itihasa genres of Indian literature, dating back to the first millennium BCE and considered to be the world's first novel. It is not known, however, when the first performances of Ramlila were held in the first place. Although the initial enactment of Ramcharitmanas by Tulsidas in the 16th century is unrecorded, according to legend, his pupil Megha Bhagat began the Ramlila, which is based on the Ramcharitmanas, in the year 1625. If you believe Norvin Hein, a professor of Divinity and Religious Studies with a specialisation in Indology, Ramlila was popular in North India between 1200 and 1500 CE, but they were based on Valmiki's Ramayana and not on the Hindu epic Ramayana. Ramlila, according to Richard Schechner, has deeper roots than it seems at first glance since it combines the lessons of old Sanskrit literature with current theatrical methods to create a more holistic experience.

The Ramlila is most likely an ancient tradition of India, according to John Brockington, a professor of Sanskrit and Indian epics who specialises in ancient Indian literature. This is because it is generally accepted by scholars that written manuscripts emerged later in Indian religions and that ancient texts were largely a product of oral tradition, and that written manuscripts emerged later in Indian religions.

As a result, not just Ramlila, but all ancient Indian epics must very likely have been recited and conveyed verbally from one generation to the next by bards and pupils in a Ramlila-like way, and consistently maintained throughout a vast geographic area by norms of acting by several teams. Furthermore, according to Brockington, the Hindu epics are much too large, with the Ramayana comprising 20,000 verses and the Mahabharata including 100,000 verses, to have survived for more than two thousand years without being written down and performed. Because of this, it is doubtful that the Ramlila tradition began in the contemporary age and spread from there.

The presence of the Hindu Ramayana has been proved in Jain literature, Ramayana reliefs in cave temples such as Ellora Caves, and Southeast Asian temple sculptures and culture by the first century CE, according to Brockington.

According to Norvin Hein, the current Ramlila began when Tulsidas' Manas text was written in the 16th century, when the Ramlila began to be performed. As Hein points out, a dance-drama type of Ramayana enactment thrived at least in the Mathura area much earlier, likely in the early decades of the Common Era, and was promoted by the Vaishnavism branch of Hinduism, who lived in the region at the time. He finds evidence for this in the Kathakali, Yaksagana, Kathak, and other Indian classical dances, which share elements, themes, and styles with Ramlila's Ramlila dance form.

In 1825, James Prinsep provided an eyewitness account of the Ramlila celebrations in Varanasi, and in 1905, H. Niehus wrote an account from Ghazipur about the same events.

Hein wrote about the Ramlila of 1949 and 1950, a time of socio-political turbulence in India after the British Indian subcontinent's division into India and Pakistan following the partition of the subcontinent by the British. Hein sent in his observations from Ramlila, which is located in Mathura.



The Troupe, the Text and the Music

Major roles in the film are often portrayed by pre-adolescent boys under the age of fourteen who are from Brahman homes and portray figures such as Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana. Prior to the ramlila, they must undertake a period of fasting and cleansing at a temple.

The lads' hands and feet are smeared with sandalwood paste for the performance, and their faces are heavily painted with thick make-up. Flowers with shimmering sequins are painted on their chins, and they have floral designs painted on their cheeks as well. Gold-plated crowns and a profusion of flower garlands are worn around their necks by these ladies. In reality, they are similar to living renditions of the sacred imagery that is distinctive of the region's religious traditions.

Many of the characters, such as Hanuman and Ravana, are performed by adult males who are dressed in disguise as children. The masks used in street performances are often made of papier maché, but the massive masks used in more spectacular spectacles, such as Hanuman's mask, are usually constructed of metal.

The recital of Tulsidas' Ramayana serves as the centrepiece of the whole spectacle. It is performed by a chorus known as the Ramayanis, who are accompanied by miniature cymbals in their performances. A monkey-like pose is assumed by the Ramayanis when they are sitting on the ground. They are led by one or more vyases, who are also known as chorus leaders and masters of ceremonies. Their open reading of the boy players' lines, which the kid actors then loudly and almost shoutedly repeat in an exceedingly stylized and unhurried way, serves as a cue and encouragement for them.

The Ramlila is the tale of the Hindu deity Rama, beginning with his conception. The epic tells the storey of his boyhood, as well as the childhoods of other significant characters in the storey, such as Sita, Lakshmana, Ravana, and others. This book contains chapters on the marriage of Sita and Rama, Rama's exile because Dharma requires him to relinquish his throne, Sita and Lakshmana joining him in the exile, their journeys through India and their meetings with revered Rishis of Hinduism, the abduction of Sita by the demon Ravana, Rama and Lakshmana's despair, how they creatively build an army from other living being

This is the narrative that is performed during Ramlila festivals. It is held in a number of villages, towns, and neighbourhoods around the country during the autumn Navratri festival season, which normally occurs in September or October. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the festival is both a religious and cultural celebration that brings people together "without discrimination of caste, religion, or age." The audience, which includes locals, participates in a spontaneous manner, taking on parts or assisting with the putting up and cleaning up of the stage, the creation of costumes, and the preservation of the Ramlila region.

It is traditionally held at night in a makeshift open-air theatre and is generally presented by amateur performing teams selected from various parts of the community. Singers and musicians, men and women, the old and the young, all take part in the production, singing the lines to music and reciting monologues. It is common for the recitations and the storyline of the play to be based on Ramacharitamana's work. The conversation is all improvised, and it is often sensitive to the responses of the audience. Dhol drummers and other musicians are among those who take part. The mood is generally upbeat and free-spirited, with members of the audience whistling and making comments as the narrative progresses. It is flanked by food vendors, and bigger plays feature a fair in the vicinity of the stage. In order to appeal to the crowd, the surrounding surroundings are temporarily transformed into bazaars. The preparations are overseen by a committee (samiti). For ages, in many rural locations, traditional Ramlila theatres have grown up, and hundreds of people would often make the trek nightly to see the show, sometimes travelling for kilometres as if they were on a religious pilgrimage in ancient times. Actors are often not paid or are compensated insignificantly for their work; nonetheless, they are supplied with free food and lodging by the villages or committee. The expenses of the performance are often covered by fundraising efforts in the community, which are generally coordinated by self-organized Ramlila Committees.

The poem Radheshyam Ramayan by Pandit Radheshym Kathavachak, written in the early twentieth century, is often utilised in Ramlila theatre because of its commentary on the political situation of the period, as well as its use of simple language and symbolism, among other reasons. The vocabulary in the poem is appropriate for both fighting scenes and more "rousing" situations since it matches the "themes and dramatic style" of Ramlila's performance.

A Ramlila is not only a play performed in a drama theatre; rather, it is arranged in such a way that it encourages and allows the audience to participate. In large-scale plays, the audience goes with the performers from one location to another, they chant or co-recite passages, and they immerse themselves in the play as minor or important characters, while the principal parts are portrayed by a troupe of professional actors. When the good wins, the audience applauds; nevertheless, when a wrong occurs, as as the abduction of Sita and her captivity against her will by the demon Ravana, the audience feels

unhappy. They take part in the burning of the effigies, and they are invited to join in the celebrations when Rama returns to Ayodhya after his exile. It is a theological immersion experience in the best sense.



Ramlila At Ramnagar, Varanasi

It was Maharaja Udit Narayan Singh, Kashi Naresh, who initiated the tradition of staging the Ramlila in Ramnagar, which is located across the Ganges river from the Hindu pilgrimage city of Varanasi. With the assistance of Pandit Laxmi Narayan Pandey's family (the current vyaas ji of the Ramlila in Ramnagar), the tradition of staging the Ramlila in Ram In the reign of his successor Maharaj Ishwari Prasad Narayan Singh, it gained widespread popularity, and the subsequent Maharajas of the Royal House of Benares continued to support it, resulting in the creation of participatory environmental theatre (Site-specific theatre) on a grand scale, with audiences ranging from several thousand to over 100,000 for some performances.

In the Ramlila, a cycle of plays is presented that recalls the epic narrative of Lord Rama as recorded in the Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas' version of the Ramayana. The Ramcharitmanas is the Ramayana version written by Tulsidas. Ramnagar hosts a series of plays, funded by the Maharaja, that are played every evening for a total of 31 days. The Ramnagar Ramlila is conducted over a period of 31 days, during which the full Ramacharitmanas is performed, rather than the normal 10 verses for a shortened performance. Luxurious settings, dialogue, and visual spectacle are among of the things that make it so popular. Several stages have been built in Ramnagar by the town and are each named after key locations from the Ramayana epic, which is on display throughout the town. During the performance, the permanent buildings and a number of temporary structures function as sets, representing various places such as Ashok Vatika, Janakpuri, Panchavati, Lanka, and other locales. As a result, the whole city transforms into a massive open-air stage, and the audience follows the performers from one location to the next with each instalment of the show. Throughout the performance, the players and audience members walk from one location to another and join the chorus, creating the impression that they are participating and are a part of the drama.

Preparations begin weeks before the performance begins, and the Maharaja is customarily present for the auditions, when Svarupas, literally heavenly embodiments, of the many characters from the Ramayana are selected from amongst local actors to portray them. Important roles are often inherited by families; for example, the position of Ravana was held by the same family from 1835 to 1990, while the roles of Hanuman, Jatayu, and Janaka are typically picked by the Vyasa family. Important roles are also inherited by individuals. When the Dussehra celebrations get out with a vibrant spectacle, Kashi Naresh rides an elephant to the front of the parade to mark the beginning of the festival. Then, dressed in silk and brocade, he arrives in Ramnagar to begin the month-long Ramlila folk theatrical festival. Hundreds of sadhus known as Ramayanis converge upon the town at this time to see and recite the Ramcharitmanas text. Many members of the audience bring a copy of the Ramacharit Manas, which is often referred to as Manas, and read stanza after stanza after the characters have finished their discussion. They do not go to Ramlila, but rather immerse themselves in the mythology and celebration as part of their spiritual practise; they do not just attend the event.

When Rama returns home, the space within the city undergoes a double transformation, first from a city to a theatre and then from a theatre to mythic geography, as the scale of the performance is gradually increased to mythic proportions, before being reduced only at the end, when the Raja himself becomes part of the theatre, thereby incorporating local elements into the storey itself. At the conclusion of the play, when the swarups, or performers, leave, they remove their garlands and present them to members of the Royal family, as well as giving darshan to the audience one more time. An aarti is conducted at the conclusion of each episode; shouts such as "Har Har Mahadev" and "Bolo! Raja Ramchandra ki Jai!" ring through the air as members of the audience join in on the chanting. Afterwards, a jhanki (literally, a peek or glimpse) tableaux of frozen famous moments from the 'Manas' is given, which not only distils and crystallises the essence of the narrative for the audience, but is also admired for its magnificent impact, is presented.

Though there are several local legends about the origins of this Ramlila, one of which suggests that it was first staged in a nearby village, Chota Mirzapur, after the one in Varanasi was disrupted by floods in the Ganges, from where it evolved into the current Ramlila, which is by far the most traditional rendition of the Ramayana and has been the focus of research for many decades by scholars from all over the world,

As Rama defeats the evil king Ravana on the last day of celebrations, the celebrations reach their zenith.

Kashi Naresh organises a plethora of processions and shows that draw in over a million pilgrims each year, according to his website.



The Future of the Ramleela of Ramnagar

There is little question that Ramlila will continue to be celebrated throughout Northern India in the foreseeable future. However, there are certain issues with Ramnagar Ramlila, which I will just touch on briefly in this article. Money is becoming more scarce, and traditions are becoming increasingly stale. Even taking into consideration the fact that it is common in India for people to refer to the "ancient days" as having greater magnificence, Although there is greater piety and religious intensity (which corresponds to the devolution depicted in the yuga-theory of history in common speech), it seems that the Ramlila of Ramnagar is less wealthy and elaborately prepared than in previous years. A significant portion of this is an issue of financial resources. The Maharaja receives a subsidy from the Government of Uttar Pradesh, but the amount is insufficient to keep Ramlila running successfully. In addition, the Maharaja contributes his own funds. However, he finds himself in a terrible situation. If he or his successors succeed in becoming large-scale businessmen, they will have to give up part of the influence they have gained as a result of their seeming "disinterest" in "the world." The Fort might be converted into a tourist attraction, but a great deal of intangible value will be lost in the process. For the Maharaja of Benares, at the very least, he lives in the form of a mystery. A mystery in the meaning of the mediaeval Europeans is an occurrence whose origins and consequences are entwined in one another. He is both the cause and the effect of the Ramlila, and he is both the cause and the effect of it. The effigies, the surroundings, and the costumes will all become shabby if no economically beneficial method is devised for Ramlila's production aspects. Already, there are Ramlilas that I've seen that have nicer costumes than the ones here. Because he cannot be both a Maharaja through and through and an industrialist through and through at the same time, the Maharaja, and the Ramlila, seem to be imprisoned. This double duty is not possible due to the unique circumstances of Kashi-Benares-RamnagarRamlila. As a result, he is confronted with the paradox of upholding a ceremonial superstructure via the use of a technological infrastructure.

The Maharaja of Benares, on the other hand, is unique because the Ganga and Kashi are unique. India has evolved into a contemporary secular state, but its ritual parts of culture, particularly those seen among its rural populations as well as in village-like communities in urban areas, have remained strong

and alive. The Maharaja of Benares is able to sustain his Maharaja identity only on the basis of ritual: tradition, pomp, public religious devotion, Ramlila: theatrical acts, and other forms of public religious devotion. When we look at Ramnagar Ramlila, we see a basically folk art form that was mastered throughout the colonial period of India's history, in a "princely state" that has continued to exist in the contemporary day and that reflects the unique characteristics of Benares. As a theatre professional, this theatrical-religious-social event is of particular importance to me, and I strongly suggest it to other Indian theatre professionals. If Kathakali and other forms have evolved significant and strong aesthetics that are based on classical standards (although reinterpreted), then Ram nagar Ramlila has developed its own aesthetics that are based on traditional folk norms. These are much more enticing to me than traditional dance and theatre, which are also excellent choices. When creating Ra.mllla's performance, he incorporates mythology, audience participation and political allusion as well as constructed and found environments, performers of all levels of skill and involvement, and even the current sociopolitical climate to create a work of immense diversity and power. Despite the fact that Ramlila cannot be reproduced, it may be studied and learnt from.

CONCLUSION

The above forms of ramlila bear all the marks of bhakti-related devotional rituals. There are, however, more secularised forms of ramlila. They may be performed in villages and towns, in temporary tents or theatre halls on a Western-influenced proscenium stage.

The style of the performances can be that of melodramatic folk theatre influenced by Indian movies. They can involve dance sequences in various Indian classical and semi-classical styles or even in the glittering style of Bollywood musicals. Although they still serve as reminders of Rama's virtues and victory, they are more entertaining in character than the devotional ramlilas.

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