

## STORY OF RAMA : SEVEN COUNTRIES IN SEVEN CHAPTERS

*An Epic's Journey, An Eternal Story*

### DRAFT AGENDA

#### OPENING: 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 2022

- Greetings by Dr. Kontogiannis Constantin, Member of the CID Executive Committee
- Presentation of the officials (CID, UNESCO, INDIA.....)
- Introductory Speech by Prof. Dr. Alkis Raftis, President of International Dance Council
- Presentation of Dr Uma Narayana Murthy, host of the seminar- by Dr. Kontogiannis

#### PROGRAMME

Telecasting Dates	Session-1	Session-2
<b>DAY - ONE:</b> 8 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2022	<i>Briefing from Dr. Kontogiannis Constantin followed by presentation from Dr N. Uma</i>  (a) Hindu texts (b) Itihasa— brief introduction (c) Brief introduction of two epics — style of writing, grammar. etc. (d) Ramayana as a main subject (chapters and the brief story) (e) The Indian versions of Ramayana in brief	(f) Trade, Missionaries and spread of Indian philosophy (g) Kings --- their dynasties and religion followed (h) Temple and Arts & Literature (i) Q and A
<b>DAY - TWO:</b> 15 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2022  <b>RAMAYANA EPIC IN SOUTH-EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES – PART - 1</b>	<i>Briefing from Dr. Kontogiannis Constantin followed by presentation from Dr N. Uma</i>  (a) Myanmar (b) Cambodia	(c) Indonesia (d) Laos (e) Q and A
<b>DAY - THREE:</b> 22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct. 2022  <b>RAMAYANA EPIC IN SOUTH-EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES – PART - 2</b>	<i>Briefing from Dr. Kontogiannis Constantin followed by presentation from Dr N. Uma</i>  (a) Malaysia	(b) Philippines (c) Thailand (f) Q and A
<b>DAY - FOUR:</b> 22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct. 2022  <b>CONCLUDING SESSION</b>	<i>Briefing from Dr. Kontogiannis Constantin followed by presentation from Dr N. Uma</i>  (a) A brief summary of other popular versions of Ramayana in India and beyond the border of the seven countries (b) Comparison with other epics (c) Complements on puppet theatre (d) Q and A : Interaction with participants/ The floor will be open for discussion/ Perspectives  (e) Vote of Thanks	



*Note: There will be ten (10) minutes break between the two sessions*

### SYNOPSIS (OVERVIEW OF WEBINAR)

Few works of literature produced in any place at any time have been as popular, influential, imitated and successful as the great and ancient Sanskrit epic poem, the *Valmiki Ramayana*.  
– Robert Goldman, Professor of Sanskrit, University of California at Berkeley

**Hindu texts** are manuscripts and voluminous historical literature which are related to any of the diverse traditions within Hinduism. A few of these texts are shared across these traditions and they are broadly considered Hindu scriptures. These include the Puranas, Itihasa and Vedas. Scholars hesitate in defining the term "Hindu scriptures" given the diverse nature of Hinduism, but many list the Bhagavad Gita and the Agamas as Hindu scriptures

**Iti hasa** were stories that the storyteller had seen far himself (*iti-* thus indeed, *hasa-* it happened).

The Ramayana and Mahabharata fall in the category of itihasa, as their composers, Valmiki and Vyasa, respectively, claimed they witnessed the events they spoke off: they even participated in the stories. This made the itihasa far more real, and popular, than a purana, for no one could plane they had visited the realm off the gods.

**Rama** --- is a major deity in Hinduism. He is the seventh and one of the most popular avatars of Vishnu.

**Rama iconography** shares elements of Vishnu avatars, but has several distinctive elements. He is picturised as blue or dark color ,with two hands holding arrow and bow. in tribhanga pose , wearing reddish color clothes. His brother Lakshmana is on his left side while his wife Sita always on the right of Rama, both of golden-yellow complexion.

**Rama's symbolism** - Rama's life story is imbued with symbolism. Rama's life and comments emphasise that one must pursue and live life fully, that all three life aims are equally important: virtue (dharma), desires (kama), and legitimate acquisition of wealth (artha).

**Ramayana** - The primary source of the life of Rama is the Sanskrit epic *Ramayana* composed by the legendary poet Rishi Valmiki. The epic had many versions across India's regions. Here is a summary of the five middle chapters (kandams) of the epic

Once when Rama was sent to the forest [Ayodhya Kandam], He chased a deer, meanwhile, Sita was kidnapped, Eagle Jatayu was killed but – before dying – informed Rama that Sita was prisoner in Lanka [Aranya Kandam]. Then there were discussions and planning with the king Sugreeva [for the war to liberate Sita], Vali -brother of Sugreeva - was killed [Kishkinta Kandam], the ocean was crossed and Lanka was burnt [Sundara Kandam]. Then Lord Rama, slayed the kidnapper demons Kumbakarna and Ravana and rescued Goddess Sita [Yuddha Kandam]. This is the gist of Ramayanam.

**Mahabharata** - (With) the birth of sons of Pandu and Drthrashtira and (failed attempt) of burning alive Pandavas in a wax house, wealth grabbed illegally, exile in forests (of Pandavas), retreat in the house of Matsya (Kingdom), cows stolen and rescued, in battle, attempts for compromise (between the Pandavas and Karavas by Lord Krishna) failed, Bhishma, Drona Duryodhana and others killed, is MAHABHARATA



### SYNOPSIS (OVERVIEW OF WEBINAR)

#### RAMAYANA VERSIONS IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Ramayana is considered as the source of great tradition not only on India but also beyond the shores of India. Though India is the homeland of Ramayana, it now belongs to the entire world and is a unique social, cultural, spiritual, philosophical and literary treasure of the mankind. Differences in the ideological, political and religious setup of the countries influenced by the ramayana, have never been a hindrance in progress and popularity of the epic. The regions that have come under the sweet of this epic constitute mainly the South-East Asian countries like Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

- **Hikayat Seri Rama** : The Malaysian version of the Ramayana, known as (HSR), offers fascinating material for a study of acculturation. Here, Dasharatha is set to be the great grandson of prophet Adam. Ravana is shown having boons from Allah instead of Brahma. Thus, we find that Advent of Islam did not make any difference, On the contrary, fresh vitality was conferred on the original by proper adaptation, assimilation and integration.
- **Kakawin Ramayana**:(Indonesia) First version of Ramayana in old Javanese is found by Yogeshwara in 19th century A.D, a work of 2774 stanza in manipravala style i.e. mixture of Sanskrit and Kawi language. Ravana badham of Bhatti, popularly known as Bhattikavya has greatly influenced Indonesian and javanese Ramayanas. In Bali a Ramakavacha of 22 stanzas in Sanskrit is found. Some of the verses of this are identical with the Valmiki Ramayana.
- **Reamker** is a Cambodian epic poem, based on the Sanskrit's Rāmāyana epic. The name means "Glory of Rama". It is the national epic of Cambodia. The earliest mention of this epic's manuscript in Cambodia dates back to the 17th century based on Jatak stories (stories of the former births of Buddha) mentioned on rock inscriptions. Ramayana is a poetic version of the one of tales mentioned in jatak stories. The Reamker differs from the original Rāmāyana in some ways, featuring additional scenes and emphasis on Hanuman and the maleficent mermaid princess Suvannamaccha.
- **Ramakien or Ramakirti**: that Thai version of the Ramayana is the most popular story of Rama in South East Asia. In Ramakien Sita is the daughter of Ravana and Mandodari ( T'os'akanth and Mont'o), Bibisana (p'ip'ek), the astrologer brother of Ravana, predicts calamity from the horoscope of Sita. So Ravana has her thrown into the waters, who, later, is picked by king Janaka ( Janok). The rest of the story is similar to Valmiki Ramayana. However, some folk elements have crept in the Hikayat Seri Rama and Ramakien.
- **Phra Lak Phra Lam**: is Laos version of Ramayana. It is the national epic of the Lao people, and is the Lao adaptation of the Dasaratha Jataka, a story narrating one of the previous life of Buddha as a Bodhisatta named Rama. It was brought to Laos and other Southeast Asia by propagation of Buddhism. The story reached Laos much later than Cambodia and Thailand (Siam) and thus was affected by local adaptation.
- **Maharadia Lawana** : sometimes spelled **Maharadya Lawana** or **Maharaja Rāvāṇa** is a Maranao epic of Phillipines, which tells a local version of the Indian epic Ramayana. It narrates the adventures of the monkey-king, Maharadia Lawana, to whom the Gods have granted immortality. Ramayana narrative arrived in the Philippines some time between the 17th to 19th centuries, via interactions with Javanese and Malaysian cultures which traded extensively with India.
- **Yama Zatdaw** : Myanmar's national epic, is the Burmese version of the Ramayana and Dasaratha Jataka. There are nine known pieces of the Yama Zatdaw in Myanmar. The Burmese name for the story itself is Yamayana, while zatdaw refers to the acted play or being part of jataka tales of Theravada Buddhism. The Burmese Ramayana was influenced greatly by Ayutthaya, during which various Konbaung



Dynasty kings invaded the kingdom. The invasions often brought back spoils of war, including elements of Ramakien (Thai version of Ramayana) into the epic.

### SYNOPSIS (OVERVIEW OF WEBINAR)

#### RAMAYANA IN SHADOW PLAY AND PUPPETRY OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Pictorial presentations of gods, humans and nature were part of human culture from its very beginning. They served to communicate with divine spirits but also, they helped in enlarging human knowledge of reality. They were drawings, reliefs, sculpture. and they included puppets and shadows also.

The Asian spiritual culture exploited the shadow theatre for telling the most representative sacred, epic stories such as Ramayana and Mahabharata.

From all accounts the shadow play appears to have been one of the earliest forms of entertainment known to man. From the beginnings of early cultures in the East, and ever since man began to make crude figures of bone or wood or cut and carved them on skin. It required only the combination of light casting a shadow on a surface when a figure was held in front of it to initiate him into an art of momentous significance in the history of mankind.

The German scholars were the first to propose that the shadow play was originated in India. they gathered data from ancient Indian inscriptions, religious and literary compositions of India, ranging from the Pre- christian era to the 13th century. A.D. Indian scholars have also contributed to the study of the inscriptions and literary works, written in the regional languages of India.

In India there are varied types of both black and white as well as coloured types of figures were known and used for performances.

In China, as in india, has an evidence of early existence of shadow play which had connection with folk religion, magic and superstition. As time passed shadow play became an art of performance in Chinese culture. The Buddhist sutras became basis for a 'preaching scrolls' type of shadow play in China.

The popularrrity of the shadow play in India and China and the travelling showmen were searching for suitable venues and thus the art of shadow play was travelle in and out of these to countries.

Such immigrants of puppeteers ,the group of players / artists were closely associated with the gypsies . And they moved from place to place providing entertainment for living. The maritime between the neighbouring South- East -Asian countries countries also helped to spread thge art of puppetry in South East Asia , ASEAN countries and aldo beyond the shores of India and China. The puppetry art became reason to spread of religions like Hinduism epics and texts of Buddhism also.

During this webinar series . the présender will give a brief introduction about the shadow play and puppetry of South East Asian countries and the influence of Ramayana epic on them will also be discussed. Videos and photographs will be shown, whenever ineeded.