The Ramayana Project

Collection Contents

The Ramayana Project (17 records)

One of the most important literary works of ancient India, the Ramayana (The journey of Rama) has had a profound impact on art and culture in the Indian subcontinent and South-East Asia. The story was first told in the Sanskrit epic poem by Sage Valmiki some two and a half thousand years ago. The text consists of 24,000 verses in seven books and 500 cantos (stanzas), and survives today in several thousand partial and complete manuscripts.

Thematically, the Ramayana explores human values and the concept of righteousness. The essence of the Ramayana has been expressed in a diverse array of regional cultures and artistic mediums across India. Transmission, mobility, adaptation and concrete expression of the Rama theme among different communities and regions in India and outside, in South-east Asia and parts of Central Asia, is the finest example of the power of the ‘oral word’, that transcends all boundaries, be they geographic, temporal, social or literary. It provides for plurality, diversity and continuity of the tradition.

These short films aim to understand and capture the ethos of the Ramayana. They portray how the story in the epic has changed to include local flavour without losing the central theme and message. The films, through experts, bring out the nuances of the distinct Ramayanas as performed in different parts of India.

The stories of Ramayana defy categorization of art as folk or classical, rural or urban, textual or oral. Literary, oral, kinetic and pictorial aspects intermingle to generate multiple renditions of the text in different locales and contexts, each rendition with unique variations and linguistic distinction. It is indeed the performative aspect of the text which makes it fluid, accessible and adaptable. It accounts for its preservation, survival, transmission and mobility, cutting across boundaries of time and space.

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