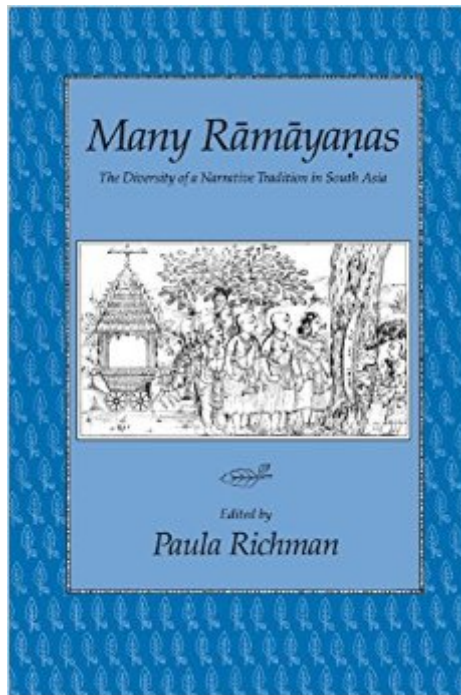


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Many Ramayanas: The Diversity Of A Narrative Tradition In South Asia



Synopsis

Throughout Indian history, many authors and performers have produced, and many patrons have supported, diverse tellings of the story of the exiled prince Rama, who rescues his abducted wife by battling the demon king who has imprisoned her. The contributors to this volume focus on these "many" Ramayanas. While most scholars continue to rely on Valmiki's Sanskrit Ramayana as the authoritative version of the tale, the contributors to this volume do not. Their essays demonstrate the multivocal nature of the Ramayana by highlighting its variations according to historical period, political context, regional literary tradition, religious affiliation, intended audience, and genre. Socially marginal groups in Indian society—Telugu women, for example, or Untouchables from Madhya Pradesh—have recast the Rama story to reflect their own views of the world, while in other hands the epic has become the basis for teachings about spiritual liberation or the demand for political separatism. Historians of religion, scholars of South Asia, folklorists, cultural anthropologists—all will find here refreshing perspectives on this tale.

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Customer Reviews

I strongly recommend this book to any reader who wishes to get a sense of the diversity of Ramayana traditions out there. It truly shows how the Ramayana is more than a single story. The epic is a living body of ideas and pieces which can be put together in lots of ways to illuminate life in many contexts. This book is best for those who already have a lot of familiarity with the basic story and have read at least one version in depth. Otherwise, it will be hard for you to appreciate this

book.

Shipped on time with no hassle. Perfect for class use.

Author Richman makes the most important point that there can be many thousands of Ramayanas. Epics are such that the stories and characters in them are branches that can be expanded to many epics. It is indeed the case with Ramayana and Mahabharata. The folk songs describe the many thousand Ramas and Krishnas. The author also narrates the story of Ramayana for those who may not be familiar with it. All of the Orient knows the story well, and its many versions. A somewhat different version is the SriLanka tale in which Ravana is the virtuous but unfortunate hero, and tells the story from his point of view. The author also narrates the brilliant Indian story to answer the question of how many Ramas and Ramayanas are there. In this story, God Rama's ring falls down and disappears into the underworld. Hanuman goes to look for it there, and cannot find it. The king of the underworld shows him a platter of thousands of rings and asks Hanuman to pick the ring Rama lost, and Hanuman cannot, since the all rings look identical. Then the king tells Hanuman that Rama drops his ring at the end of each of his incarnations, and the number of Ramas that incarnated is equal to the number of rings that the king has collected on the platter. It is widely believed in folk songs that God Rama leaves his ring in the underworld at the end of everyone of his incarnations on earth!

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