

**Om Sri Ramaya Namah! Om Sri Ramaya Namah! Om Sri Ramaya Namah!**

## **A comparative study of some of the most prominent Ramayanams**

### **Shri Ramacharithhamanasam or Tulasi Ramayanam**

**Om Sri Ramaya Namah! Om Sri Ramaya Namah! Om Sri Ramaya Namah!**

#### **Shri Ramacharithhamanasam or Tulasi Ramayanam**

Let me reiterate that we are here not trying to determine which of the Ramayanam is the best or better than the other because each one will stand out excellent. Each of these Ramayanams is a supreme creation. Like Adhyatma Ramayanams, this Thulasi Ramayanam is also highly devotional. I am fully convinced that an ordinary poet or even a highly talented and highly scholarly poet would never be able to author such a book. Only someone with special divine powers and talents and knowledge such as an Omniscient can create such supreme and faultless work.

Shri Ramacharithhamanasam was written by the most divine poet called Thulasidas and that is why it is also known as Thulasi Ramayanam meaning the Ramayanam written by Thulasi. As in Adhyatma Ramayanam, Thulasi Ramayanam also starts with Ishta Devatha Vandanam or with worship of all favorite deities. The difference is, here Thulasi provides a very detailed description of each of the deities and the reason for worshiping each of them. Of course, Adhyatma Ramayanams also do the same but the narration is not as large as Thulasi Ramayanam. I am sure that even an atheist who read this book once would turn out to be a staunch devotee of the hero of this book, Lord Sri Ramachandra Swamy.

All these poets have incorporated a lot of universal knowledge as a part of the story. Just to provide an example Thulasi has stated that there are eight million four hundred thousand different species of living beings that inhabit the land, water and air of this world. Certainly, it may be difficult to verify the accuracy of the statement but until such time we are able to prove otherwise we have to accept it as accurate. Again, just for clarification let me point out that under one species there could be an infinite number of different creatures. For example under animals there are innumerable numbers of different animals.

Thulasidasa has in his Ramayanam established that the story of Raghunatha or Sri Rama Deva will bring good fortune and wipe away all impurities and sins and evils and negativities attached to the age of Kali or Kali Yuga. It is not just for those who read or listen to Ramayanam but even if one person reads it with devotion then to that extent the impurities will be wiped away from this earth. That means the benefit of reading Ramayanam is universal.

Thulasi wrote this Ramayanam as if it was being described by the most holy saint Yanjavalkya to his disciple Bharadwaja as responses to his questions.

Bharadwaja's question was also very interesting. His question was who is this "Rama" being always worshiped by Shankara or Mahadeva who is immortal, who is a fountain of joy and a storehouse of all wisdom and perfection. Why does this Shankara repeat the name "Rama"? I have heard and known of a "Rama" who was the prince of Ayodhya. Is Shankara worshiping the same "Rama"? So Thulasi's Ramayanam is the answer provided by Yanjavalkya to Bharadwaja for the above question. But Yanjavalkya's answer was a pure repetition of what Sri Mahadeva explained to Sri Parvathi Devi. So Thulasi Ramayanam is the Uma Maheswara Samvadam retold by Yanjavalkya to Bharadwaja. But then again it is most interesting the way in which Shankara Bhagawan presents the story of Sri Ramachandra Swamy to Shri Bhavani or Uma or Parvathi Devi.

We can read a very detailed description of the wedding ceremony of Lord Sri Maha Deva and Goddess Parvathi Devi in the Bala Kanda of Thulasi Ramayanam. The presentation is not only narrative and beautiful but also very dramatic. The story goes like this: All the gods, demigods, semi-gods, and all other celestial

bodies were so distressed by the atrocities of the demon called Tharaka. They all approached Brahma Deva, the Creator, for help. Brahma Deva told them that only the young boy produced by Sri Maha Deva would be able to kill Tharaka Asura. But Lord Sri Maha Deva was in severe austerity. So the lord of gods of heaven, Devendra, sent Kamadeva, the god of love, or Cupid, along with a number of celestial beauties or the most beautiful damsels or nymphs of heaven to disturb the austerity of Lord Sri Mahadeva. Though with a lot of effort Kamadeva was able to disturb Lord Shri Mahadeva from his austerity, but Kamadeva was burnt to ashes by opening the third eye of the terribly agitated Lord Shri Mahadeva.

And when Lord Sri Mahadeva came out of his austerity, Brahmadeva, Devendra, all other gods of heaven, the seers, the sages, the saints of heaven and all other votaries of Lord Shri Mahadeva worshiped, prayed, prostrated and requested him to get married to Goddess Sri Parvathi Devi. That is why all the celestial bodies, Brahma Deva and Lord Shri Maha Vishnu went on a highly pompous procession along with the bridegroom to be, to Lord Shri Mahadeva, and arranged the wedding ceremony of Parvathi Devi the daughter of Mount Himalaya and Mainaka or Maina.

Let us now fast forward to Yudhddha Kanda. We all know that somewhat at the beginning of battle between Sri Rama Deva, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Vibhishana, Sugreeva and his entire infinite number of supporters of monkey soldiers were defeated by Indrajith, the elder son of Ravana, by shooting the Nagasthra. [Nagasthra is a missile-like arrow which is capable to spray the deadliest of the poisons into the enemy troupe and make them all unconscious instantaneously. Naga means serpent or snake. And Nagasthra means arrow of serpent. And in Kamba Ramayana I will try to explain the technique used by Nagasthra and how it suffocates and kills the enemies.] Sri Rama Deva, Lakshmana, Sugreeva and all his forces were down to the ground with the terrible spell of the deadly poisonous impact of the Nagasthra and were to be completely killed and destroyed within a day or two.

And Sri Rama Deva and all his forces were unconsciously lying on their deathbed on the battlefield and at that time Garuda, the king of birds, happened to fly over there to meet his master. Garuda or Vainatheya, son of Vinitha, is the vehicle of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. And Sri Ramachandra Swamy of course is the incarnation of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu and therefore Sri Rama Deva is the master of Garuda. When Garuda flew over the battlefield the entire spell of Nagasthra was removed and all of them including Sri Rama Deva and Lakshmana got up with more energy and power as if they all had a very nice and relaxing sound sleep.

Garuda was astonished and stunned and asked to self (to Garuda's self) and then to his master Lord Sri Rama Deva that what is the reason for Sri Rama Deva and his forces fell unconscious with the spell of Nagasthra from Indrajith and then how is that Garuda was able to save them. Though Garuda was humble by all means to Lord Sri Rama Deva, unknowingly a self pride grew in the mind of Garuda that unless he had arrived in time Sri Rama Deva and all his forces would have been completely eliminated from the face of this earth. Garuda is the born arch enemy of all serpents and no serpents and the poisons of the serpents of all the three worlds of the universe have the power to stand against Garuda.

Sri Rama Deva directed Garuda to approach Shri Maha Deva with his question in his mind. Garuda approached Shri Maha Deva and asked the question why the incarnation of his Master, Lord Shri Maha Vishnu, has to accept the help from him, one of a very low-level subordinate, to save the life of Sri Rama Deva, Lakshmana and all the forces.

Lord Sri Maha Deva responded to Garuda by saying that he can well explain the reasons, but it would be more appropriate for Garuda to approach Kaka Bhushundi or Kaka Pusundi and ask the same question. Kaka Bhushundi is the son of Brahma Deva, and he is a Chiranjivi. A Chiranjivi is someone who lives forever and for many Yugas. Markendeya and Kaka Bhushundi have survived even the great deluge. Kaka Bhushundi was always with Sri Rama Chandra Swamy from the very birth. Kaka Bhushundi is someone who is equally scholastic, philosophical, and divine and a staunch votary of Sri Rama Deva as Lord Sri Maha

Deva. But both Garuda and Kaka Bhushundi belong to the same species, and it would be better for Garuda to learn it from Kaka Bhushundi.

Garuda approached Kaka Bhushundi and asked the same question. And Kaka Bhushundi's response to Garuda was the narration of the entire stories of Sri Rama Chandra Swamy. Lord Sri Maha Deva was also listening to the discourse of Kaka Bhushundi to Garuda. And when Sri Maha Deva explains the stories of Sri Rama Chandra Swamy to Parvathi Devi, he tells her that he is going to repeat what Kaka Bhushundi narrated to Garuda.

Therefore, according to Thulasi, the order is that Kaka Bhushundi to Garuda and those stories are retold by Sri Maha Deva to Sri Parvathi Devi and then those stories are again retold by Yanjyavalka to Bharadwaja.

There are hundreds of very devotional and emotional episodes very unique to Thulasi Ramayanam. Let me state a couple of interesting stories I read only in Thulasi Ramayanam.

In one of the previous eons there lived a demon named Jalandhara. Jalandhara was so powerful, and he defeated all the kings and even the lord of gods, Devendra. He ruled all the three worlds of the universe. It was intolerable for the inhabitants of the earth, heaven and the netherworld to bear with his atrocities. All the Devas went and prayed to Lord Sri Maha Deva to kill Jalandhara and save them from the clutches of horrible atrocities. Though Maha Deva fought with Jalandhara for innumerable times he could not defeat him. It was due to the power of the chastity of Jalandhara's wife that Maha Deva was unable to kill him.

Maha Deva requested Lord Sri Maha Vishnu to help him to defeat Jalandhara. Lord Sri Maha Vishnu applied a stratagem and disguised as Jalandhara and approached his wife to break her vow of chastity. Thus, Maha Deva was able to kill Jalandhara. But when Jalandhara's wife came to know of the deception, she cursed Lord Sri Maha Vishnu to be born in the human form. Lord Maha Vishnu accepted the curse and that is why he was incarnated as Sri Rama in the human form. And Jalandhara was born as Ravana. Actually, Lord Sri Maha Vishnu blessed to give him final release or ultimate salvation and that is why in the next

birth as Ravana he was killed by Sri Rama, the incarnation of Lord Maha Vishnu, in order to liberate him from the cycles of innumerable births and deaths.

Also, there is another story how that great seer Narada cursed his most favorite supreme Master, Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. When Sri Maha Deva told Sri Parvathi Devi there was an incident that Narada, the staunchest votary of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu, had cursed Maha Vishnu, Parvathi Devi was really shocked and taken aback. [I am sure that not only Parvathi Devi anyone who learns that Narada had cursed Maha Vishnu will be in the same plight because we all know that Narada's lips are always muttering "Narayana" "Narayana" "Narayana" and how and when he got time to curse the same "Narayana".] Out of unbound curiosity and extreme anxiety Parvathi Devi humbly requested Sri Parameswara to narrate the whole incident. Sri Parameswara told Sri Parvathi Devi that the illusory power of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu cannot be measured and cannot be determined by anyone in any of the universes.

Sri Maha Deva described the story and it goes like this: One day when Narada was traveling in mount Himalaya by singing the glories of his master Lord Sri Maha Vishnu he happened to notice a cave on the banks of river Ganga. Inside the cave was like Amaravathi, the palace of Devendra, but the surroundings were far more serene and charming with thick woods of the great Mount Himalaya and the holy river Ganga. Narada found it as the most suitable place for severe meditative austerity. And he went on austerity.

Devendra naturally got scared that Narada would be more powerful when he would be blessed and granted with all boons whatever he wanted by his master Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. So, he requested Kama Deva and a bunch of most beautiful celestial nymphs to go and disturb Narada and break his austerity. None of the tricks played by Kama Deva and the celestial beauties could disturb Narada. But Narada convinced Kama and other celestial beauties that he will not proceed with his austerity and asked them to go and pacify Devendra that his position will never be affected.

Narada was applauded by Brahma Deva, Devendra and other gods and celestial bodies for his selfless and concentrated devotion to Lord Sri Maha Vishnu.

Narada then went and told Lord Sri Maha Deva the futile effort of Kama Deva and the celestial beauties to disturb his austerity. Lord Sri Maha Deva was also very proud of the great seer Narada and blessed him but warned not to tell the story to Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. Narada prostrated bid bye to Kailas Natha.

He then went straight to Vaikunda in Palazhi to meet and greet his master Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. Narada worshiped, prayed and prostrated to Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. In spite of Maha Deva's warning Narada described the incident about the futile attempt of Kama Deva and party to disturb his austerity. Lord Sri Vishnu Bhagawan immediately understood that the tree of self pride is growing tall and strong in the mind and heart of Narada. Lord Sri Maha Vishnu wanted to bless his votary and devotee by arresting the growth of the self pride within him and then to remove it completely. Lord Sri Maha Vishnu devised an appropriate plan.

Narada again worshiped, prayed and prostrated and bowed his head to the feet of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu and bid bye and went on his way by singing the glories of his master Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. On the way Narada noticed a beautiful and most enchanting city which looked far more superior to Vaikunda. This large and most beautiful city of eight hundred square miles was inhabited by the most handsome men and enchantingly beautiful women. Each and every man and woman over there was the most refined version of Kama Deva and Rathi Devi. [Kama Deva is the most handsome personality and of course the god of love. At the very sight of him any woman will fall in love with him. And Rathi Devi is the goddess of love and at the very sight of her any man will fall in love with her.]

King Shilanidhi was the ruler of that city. Shilanidhi had an infinite number of learned and scholarly and wise Preceptor and Ministers accompanied with an innumerable number of elephants, horses and troops. Shilanidhi's pomp and grandeur were like those of hundreds of Devendra. He was the embodiment and abode of grace, splendor and wisdom.

Shilanidhi had a daughter called Viswamohini. Viswamohini was the embodiment of beauty and charm and she put even Goddess Sri Maha Lakshmi shame and into a very envious position. She was a mine of all virtues. She was exquisite. She could not be described by words even by Anatha with his ten

thousand tongues. Narada learned that king Shilanidhi had arranged a huge celebration to select a suitor for his daughter.

We cannot blame Narada that at the very sight he wanted to marry her. Also, Narada was very confident that even if Lord Maha Vishnu sees her and gets an opportunity, he would also definitely wish to marry Viswamohini. Narada did not have any time at hand. He knew only his master Lord Sri Maha Vishnu could help him at this critical moment but again he did not have the time to go to Vaikunda and plead face to face with him. But he also knew that Lord Sri Maha Vishnu is always at the service of his devotees instantaneously. So, Narada very fervently worshiped Vishnu. Lord Sri Maha Vishnu appeared in front of him within no time. Narada requested that he be provided with the most charming and splendid form superior to that of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu.

Narada has been converted into the most glamorous and exquisitely enchanting, beautiful form. When Narada looked into the image of his new form, he was very confident that Viswamohini is definitely going to select him as her suitor leaving behind even Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. Seeing the form of Narada, Shilanidhi immediately offered him the most respectable seat. That again boosted the confidence of Narada. Two of the most respectable Brahmins also seated next to Narada. Though Narada did not recognize them they were very keenly watching Narada and very satirically laughing at him.

When the time came after the announcement of introduction Viswamohini was brought into the auditorium and was gliding in front of the suitors seated there. Though Narada was very confident that once Viswamohini had placed her eyes on the new form of Narada then she would never withdraw her eyes from him and she would immediately place the wedding garland on his neck. But alas! Viswamohini had only one look at Narada, and she never even looked to that side again at all. The Brahmins again laughed at him and asked him to go and look at his image.

Narada looked at his image in the clear water in the pool. He himself was terrified to see his form with a monkey face and a huge, deformed body. Narada rushed back to Vaikunda and accused Lord Sri Maha Vishnu that he is very selfish and



self-centered, and he does not like to see the well being and progress of his devotees and for that matter the progress of anyone else. Narada accused him that Vishnu is very cruel, very jealous, very vile and full of all types of negative qualities. Narada wanted to either die in front of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu or to curse him. Narada opted to curse him.

Because Lord Sri Maha Vishnu was instrumental in losing or separating Viswamohini from Narada, he cursed Vishnu that he has to suffer with separation of his wife in the next incarnation in human form. Also, now Narada figured out that those two Brahmins were the associates of Lord Sri Maha Deva who made fun of him with monkey faces he cursed again Lord Sri Maha Vishnu have the company of monkeys to help him in retrieving his separated wife.

Oh, the most respected devotees! This new city was created by Lord Sri Maha Vishnu with his illusive or delusive power. His delusive power made Narada think that everything is real. Lord Sri Maha Vishnu did it to ensure that his true devotees never get entrapped into self pride. Narada came to know all these with the blessings of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu.

And Lord Sri Maha Deva explained to Goddess Sri Parvathi Devi the reason why Lord Sri Maha Vishnu had to be incarnated in a human form and why he has to be separated from Sitha Devi and why he has to accept support from Sugreeva and his monkey soldiers.

There are many interesting stories and philosophies unique to Thulasi Ramayanam. Let me state here one of the most impressive concepts brought out by Thulasi in Thulasi Ramayanam. In all the Ramayanams this particular portion of Bharatha's visit to Sri Rama in Chithrakoota to bring Sri Rama back to Ayodhya and coronate him as the king is very emotional and very devotional. This portion reveals Bharatha's incomparable and unsurpassable love and devotion towards Sri Rama compared to all other Ramayanams. But surely Thulasi's Ramayanam excels them all.

In Thulasi Ramayanam when Janaka the father of Sitha Devi heard the news that Bharatha and his party along with the troops are moving to meet with Sri Rama

he was not sure what was the purpose of the visit? Janaka naturally and logically thought Kaikeyi might have devised some plot to eliminate Sri Rama forever so that he may never return and claim the kingdom. And Bharatha might be proceeding to Chithrakoota with the command from his mother. So Janaka also secretly proceeded to Chithrakoota with a large number of his forces.

But when Janaka learned the actual purpose of Bharatha's visit from his family Preceptor, Vasishta, he bowed his head down to Bharatha.

There were very lengthy dialogues between Vasishta and Bharatha. Bharatha can never think that he has the right to speak directly with Sri Rama as Sri Rama is the Master of Divinity. Therefore Bharatha entrusts Vasishta to speak on his behalf and on behalf of the kingdom. Though both Vasishta and Janaka persuaded their best to see that Bharatha withdrew from his attempt, none of their logic could work. Both Vasishta and Janaka are highly scholarly and steadfast devotees of Sri Rama, the Omniscient. But Bharatha always had valid legal, logical, political and moral reasons favorable on his side to stick to his demand.

These conversations were listened to by Devendra and other gods of heaven and all celestial bodies. They were really worried that if Bharatha wins over then the entire purpose of the incarnation of Sri Rama will be defeated. They requested Saraswathi Devi to help them exactly as she did with Manthara. But Saraswathi Devi knew the strength and power of steadfast devotion of Bharatha towards Sri Rama Deva.

I am sure I am not going to be satisfied with whatever length I write about this episode therefore let me quote some of the portions from Thulasi. This is the response given by Janaka to his wife, Sunayana:

*"Savadhana sunu sumukhi sulochani. Bharathakatha bhavabandha bimochani.*

*Dharma rajanaya bnrhambicharoo. Iham jathamathi mor pracharoo."*

Meaning:

"Attend to me, o fair-faced and bright-eyed lady! The story of Bharatha loosens the bonds of worldly existence.

Religion, statecraft and inquiry into Brahma (the Infinite) are domains to which I have some access according to my ability.”

*“so mathi mori Bharatha mahimahee. Kahai kaha chali chuathi na chahi.*

*Vidhi Ganapathi Ahipathi Shiva Saratha. Kabi kobith budh buddhibisaratha.”*

Meaning:

“But though acquainted with these subjects, that ability of mine cannot pretend to touch even the shadow of Bharatha’s greatness, much less to describe it.

To Brahma, Ganapathy (Ganesha), Shesha (the Serpent King), Shiva and Saraswathy, seers, sages and wise men and others who are clever in judgment.”

*“Bharathacharith kirthi karathuthee. Dharm sheel jun bimala bibhuthi.*

*Samunchath sunath sukhath sub kahu. Suchi surasari ruche nidhara sudhahu.”*

Meaning:

“ --- to all these do Bharatha’s acts and glory, his doings, piety and amiability, his goodness and spotless majesty are delightful to hear and to appreciate.

They surpass the celestial steam in purity and nectar in taste.”

*“Niravadhi gun nirupama purushu Bharatha sama jani.*

*Kahiaa Sumeru ki ser sama kabikul mathi sakuchani.”*

Meaning:

“Possessed of infinite virtues is he and a man above comparison; know Bharatha alone to be like Bharatha.

The wit of the whole race of poets shrinks from comparing him with any human being, even as it shrinks from declaring that Mount Sumeru weighs only a pound. [Actually, Sumeru must weigh more than this whole earth as it is far larger and huger than the Himalaya.]”

*“Aagama subhi barnath barbarni. Jimi jalahin meen gamu dharnee.*

*Bharatha amith mahima sun ranee. Janahim Ramu na sakahim bakhanee.”*

Meaning:

“Bharatha’s greatness, O fair lady, is as impossible to describe as it is impossible for a fish to move upon dry land.

Listen, O beloved queen: illimitable though Bharatha’s majesty is, Rama comprehends it, but not even he can describe it.”

Then the conversations between Janaka and Vasishta, Janaka and Sri Rama, Vasishta and Sri Rama, Bharatha and the assembly of Sri Rama, all the Preceptors, Janaka and the whole seers and saints continues at length.

And towards the end of this episode Thulasi tells us that Brahma Deva is great because he created the universe and the perfect creation of Sri Ramachandra Swamy. But Brahma Deva is greater than the greatest and the most supreme because he was able to create a Bharatha with such steadfast devotion and love towards Sri Ramachandra Swamy. Even Lord Sri Ramachandra Swamy was envious of Bharatha and confirms that there cannot be another creation like Bharatha who has such staunch and steadfast devotion and pure love towards Sri Rama (himself).

As we can write pages and pages about the uniqueness of Thulasi Das and Rama Charithamanasam let me conclude for the time being by quoting a very popular stanza from Sundara Kandam.

“Athulithabaladhamam swarnasailabhadeham

Danujavanakrisanum njaninamagraganyam.

Sakalagunanidhanam vanaranamadheesam

Raghupathivaradhootham vathajatham namami.”

Meaning:

“I make obeisance to the Son of Wind, the home of immeasurable strength, possessing a body shining like a mountain of gold (Sumeru), a fire to consume the forest of demon race, the foremost among the wise, storehouse of every excellence, the chief of the monkeys, Reghupathi’s noble messenger!”

**Om Sri Ramaya Namah! Om Sri Ramaya Namah! Om Sri Ramaya Namah!**