

FOREWORD

The Ramayana is indeed one of the greatest of epics, an outstanding work of tremendous literary value which has been with us since time immemorial. While it forms part of India's invaluable cultural and religious heritage, it has travelled far beyond the borders of India and has now, for many centuries, become a part of our shared Asian consciousness.

The greatness and the significance of the Ramayana does not lie in its antiquity or in its geographical reach alone. It lies, most of all, in the universal and eternal message that it conveys. The Ramayana is, in the truest sense of the world, a treasure-house - a repository of ageless and ever-relevant philosophical, moral, social and ethnical values. The central character in the Ramayana, Lord Rama, embodies the virtues of the "Maryada Purushottam" - the ideal man- and the ideal king, imbued above all with a total devotion to the truth and to his duty. These are values and virtues that were worthy of emulation in the ages past, and which continue to be worthy of emulation even today. Indeed, one might feel that in today's world, troubled in many ways and exposed to a dizzying pace of political, cultural and social change that is often disorienting or even destructive, the lessons of the Ramayana are more valuable than ever before. They transcend not only time but also geography. The Ramayana is as relevant in South-East Asia, and indeed in all the other parts of the world, as it is in the land of its origin.

When I first came to the Philippines, a little over a year ago, I was very happy to learn that the Ramayana was not only among academics, artistes and scholars, but even among the people at large. In his latest work, Professor Juan Francisco has traced the journey of the Ramayana from India to the Philippines and other parts of South East Asia. He brings out how the story, as also the characterization of the Lord Rama, changed as the epic journeyed beyond India, under the influence of the local cultural ethos in different countries. The various local adaptations of the Ramayana, whether very close to the original as in Thailand or more divergent as in the Philippines, nonetheless demonstrate how the different peoples of our region have assimilated each other's culture and traditions over the centuries. It also underlines the innate human urge towards synthesis and harmony, widens our outlook, and should thus contribute to deepening the spirit of mutual understanding, accommodation and even identification.

Prof. Juan Francisco is to be commended not only for his discovery of the Maharadia Lawana, the Philippine version of the Ramayana, in 1968, but also for continuing his scholarly analyses, resulting in the present book. This work is not only of original academic value, but is an important contribution to highlighting a shared cultural heritage that stretches from India to the Philippines. It thus contributes to bringing our two nations, which already have a very warm and trouble-free relationship, even closer together.

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Indian Ambassador to the Philippines

Metro Manila
March 10, 1994

PREFACE

Sometime in the early 1992, I received a note from the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA) inviting me to deliver a series of lectures on the Indian Epic, **Ramayana**. The note further stated that the audiences of these lectures will be the **dramatis personae** including the production staff of the dramatic presentation of a play based on the **Maharadia Lawana**, the Maranao version of the **Ramayana**, which I discovered in 1968, and published in 1969. The dramatic presentation of the play was scheduled to be done during the weekend nights of March 1993. These lectures were delivered as part of the rehearsals for the evening presentations even as both the players and the production staff were in the midst of these preparations.

As the idea of these lectures began to shape-up, PETA and I felt that four lectures will be sufficient to give each member of the **Ramayana** project a broad, but deep, insight into the epic story. Hence, we decided on the topic of each lecture, i. e. (1) **The Valmiki Ramayana: Values, Themes and Symbols**; (2) **Go East, Young Man, Go East: Rama's Travels to Greater India**; (3) **Ramayana Forms in Southeast Asia**; and (4) **The Indigenization of the Rama Story in the Philippines**. Apart from these lectures, the PETA group was provided with some reading materials, among which were V. Raghavan's **The Ramayana Traditions in Asia** (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1980) and my monograph **Maharadia Lawana** (Quezon City: Philippine Folklore Society, 1969). Some of these readings are cited as materials used in the lectures.

Some brief comments on the lecture may be made here. Lectures No. One, Two and Three were written primarily for the purpose of preparations for the presentations. Lecture Four was earlier prepared for an international seminar on "Ramayana Traditions and Asian Culture", held in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, October 2-6, 1986. Later, it was revised and was published in the **Philippine Studies**, Vol.37, 1989, pp. 101-111 (Ateneo de Manila). Further revisions were made on this paper, and it constituted one of the two lectures I delivered in India, during my visit in July 1992 [before (a) the Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts, New Delhi, July 24, 1992; (b) Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Madras, July 27, 1992; (c) Institute of Asian Studies, Madras, July 28, 1992; (d) Sanskrit College, Kuppuswami Sasatri Research Institute, Madras, July 27, 1992; and (e) Institut Francaise d'Indology, Pondicherry, July 29, 1992]. The reactions to this paper, by the audience it was presented to, was quite instructive, in view of the timing of the lecture, i. e. the confrontation between Hindus and Muslims in the Ayodhya City some 200 kilometers north of New Delhi. One can imagine the very highly charged situation then and up to this time, since the **Ramayana** version in the Philippines has already been **Islamized**.

Up to this moment, the title of this small volume has not been referred to, which is **From Ayodhya To Pulu Agama Niog: Rama's Journey to the Philippines**. It somehow echoes the title of **Lecture Two** which I think is very picturesque in terms of journey that our hero "had undertaken" from India to Southeast Asia. One would ask where is Pulu Agama Niog? This is a mythical island where Rama (renamed Radia Mangandiri) is master and king after he returns from rescuing Sita (**Potre Malaila Tihai**) from Maharadia Lawana in Pulu Bandiarmasir.

To supplement the information on Rama's journey to the East as described in the Lectures, I have appended two of my earlier works on the epic story, namely (A) "The Rama Story in the Post-Muslim Malay Literature of Southeast Asia" (**Sarawak Museum Journal**, Volume X (N.S. 19-20) July-December 1962, pp. 468-485) and (B) **Maharadia Lawana**. Apart from the additional information, I thought by appending these, they will add to the quality of the volume by providing more solid data on the subject, as well as enriching the citations at the end of each Lecture.

It may not be ill-considered to remark at this point that these lectures contributed to the broad understanding of the Rama epic in its original version, vis-a-vis its value and the symbolisms it reflected in the cultural life of the Indian, as well as its effect in the social and artistic-literary perspectives of the societies that accepted its influence. Moreover, the writing of the dramatic text was, I believe, facilitated with this background, resulting in the final play, **Ang Paglalakbay ni Radia Mangandiri, Ang Pilipinong Ramayana**, which was presented in twelve performances in March 1993. I will have a more extensive discussion of this presentation text in a separate work, which is planned for the next cycle.

It will be noticed that there is no bibliography at the end of this volume. This was deliberately omitted in view of the very extensive listing of the references, end-notes and biographic notes at the end of each lecture. This is to give the reader immediate access to the resources as well as additional information/clarification on/of the given reference, issue or terminologies.

In preparing a work such as this, there are a number of people who had contributed to its final accomplishment. I would, therefore, acknowledge the invaluable assistance to the following persons and institutions:

(a) Mr. Kho Ka Hu, a businessman friend of academia, who provided part of the funds in the publication of these lectures, which more or less broke the normal bureaucratic procedures at the University;

(b) The Asian Center, U.P., Diliman, through Professor Dr. Artemio D. Palongpalong, Dean, for the encouragement by way of allocating part of the printing funds from the Center's Funds;

(c) The Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA), for having become the most important venue for the efflorescence of a literary piece which had become a paramount cultural possession of all the nation-states in Southeast Asian Region, recognizing their debt to India, the source of their literary-artistic traditions, as expressed in the **Ramayana** in its various forms and aspects;

(d) Her Excellency, the Indian Ambassador to the Philippines, Mrs. Shyamala B. Cowsik, for writing the **Foreword** to this humble volume, and by this act, provided it with prestige, value and utility;

(e) Mrs. Ratna Lahiri, Ph. D., Senior Lecturer at the University of Delhi, India, currently visiting Lecturer in Hindi Language and Literature at the Asian Center, for her comments and suggestions after reading the volume enabling me to make corrections as well as enhancing its value as a research work. Despite this, however, any lapses and errors both in language and substances that may have occurred in the volume are all mine; and

(f) My wife, Beatriz, whom I call my Sakti, our son, Rajan, for the continuing inspiration both provide me so that this work will reach its final completion.

To them, I owe a debt of gratitude, which no material recompense could possibly respond for their services.

JUAN R. FRANCISCO

Devasthana
Diliman, Quezon City
8 March 1994