

## Book-Review

**Rāmāyaṇa in Indian Art and Epigraphy** by Dr. Kiran Kanth Choudary and Ms. C. Udayalakshmi, Text pages-140, Photographs-95, Harman Publishing House, New Delhi, 2006, Rs. 1400/-.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, the two great epics of India, are the treasure of our culture heritage and ethos giving the futuristic models for the society through the inspiring characters of Rāma, Lakṣhmaṇa, Bharata, Sītā, Hanumāna, Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, Karṇa, Bhīṣma and several others. Due to this fact both the works of perennial importance have found enormous literary and visual expressions through the centuries down to the present day.

The present book entitled "Rāmāyaṇa in Indian Art and Epigraphy" by Dr. Kiran Kranth Choudary and Ms. C. Udayalakshmi makes an intensive probing of the transformation of Rāmāyaṇa episodes into visual art. The study makes a fruitful attempt not only at the rendering of Rāmākathā in stone art, especially in the art of Andhra Pradesh from earliest time to the 16<sup>th</sup> cent. CE but it also takes care of the inscriptional references to *Rāmāyaṇa* and its various episodes in pan Indian context. The study also reveals that in Andhra Pradesh more than thirty temples contain *Rāmāyaṇa* panels. Of these, two temples are of special importance as these show entire Rāmāyaṇa episodes in narrative pattern. One of these temples has also label inscriptions below the narrative scenes to facilitate viewers for the exact identification of episodes. Needless to say that the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki forms the basis for the study of these panels but its various local versions like the Raṅganatha *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Bhāskara *Rāmāyaṇa* in Telugu, Pampā *Rāmāyaṇa* in Kannada and the Kaṃba *Rāmāyaṇa* in Tamil, also served as the basis for variations in their sculptural renderings.

The study divided into five chapters, deals in its first chapter of Introduction, the Glimpses of Indian Narrative Art in reference to *Rāmāyaṇa*. The second chapter deals with the emergence of Rāma Cult in the background of Vaiṣṇavism. This chapter also takes note of inscriptional references mentioning episodes and aspects of *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this context Mangalagiri and Koṇḍaviḍu pillar inscriptions of the time of Krishṇadevarāya are especially noteworthy since these pay homage to Rāma in beautiful words (p. 36). The verse 3 of Maṅgalagiri inscription mentions the setting up of the image of Rāma in a circle along with figures of Sugrīva, Lakṣhmaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, Jāmbavant, Bharata, Shatrughna and

Hanumāna by the minister Gopa. The third chapter provides the detailed study of textual variations which pertain mainly to Raṅganatha *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Bhaskara *Rāmāyaṇa* alongwith Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. Other version of south Indian *Rāmāyaṇa* have also been referred to on "as and when required basis".

The fourth chapter entitled Narrative Panels of *Rāmāyaṇa*, forming the core content of the book, deals at length episodewise renderings of *Rāmāyaṇa* in art of Andhra Pradesh, starting with *Bāla-kāṇḍa* and ending with *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*. The entire study is based mainly on the detailed representations of *Rāmāyaṇa* found on two Vijayanagara temples of 15th - 16th CE, namely Chintalaveṅkataramaṇa temple at Tāḍipatri and Kodaṇḍarāma temple at Penukoṇḍa. The former represents the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes with label inscriptions while latter (Penukoṇḍa) represents episodes upto *Sundara-kāṇḍa* in 33 panels. The detailed study of the Ramakathā Panels of these two temples is very important contribution, especially for their use in the context of regional and comparative study in future.

The study rightly reveals that the sculpural rendering of *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes begins at least from Chalukya (Ālampur and Paṭṭaḍakal temples) period in Andhra Pradesh which gradually progressed in respect of increase of episodes as well as their elaborate representations at more and more places. The authors have aptly explained that the renderings of *Rāmāyaṇa* have reached culmination in Vijayanagar temples.

The fifth chapter deals with the stray representations of episodes which however pertain to some of the main episodes of *Rāmāyaṇa* representations found in different temples.

Thus this book is of intrinsic academic merit which presents in visual language the continuity of *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes in the art of Andhra Pradesh with special reference to Vijayanagar period. The scholars have made comparative study of different episodes on the basis of texts and their actual representations which will encourage the future researchers to take up the wholesome study.

The 95 good photographs add to the value of the work, but proper mention of their findspots and dates could have made the figures more useful. It would have been better if the conclusive observations could have also been given in separate chapter.

I congratulate both the authors for such a valuable and brilliant work. The publisher is also to be thanked for his service to the Indological study by publishing such work.

**Prof. Maruti Nandan Tiwari**  
Deptt. of History of Art, Baranas Hindu University