

## Visualizing the Rāmāyaṇa Tale through the Wall Paintings of a Temple at Buguda

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**Abstract:** The *Virañchi Nārāyaṇa* temple dedicated to lord Surya at Buguda in Ganjam district (Odisha State) is richly decorated with colourful wall paintings that reflect the religious and ideological feelings of the people. The mural paintings of the temple were most likely executed in 1820s by the professional artists who followed closely the illustrated manuscripts and the *paṭachitras*. Of the wall paintings of the temple more than half of the wall space was devoted to the Rāmāyaṇa scenes while the rest of the walls exhibit succinctly the *Krishṇalīlas* and *Daśāvātāras* besides a large map of the Puri temple. Although these murals have drawn the attention of the art historians earlier who studied them briefly from different perspectives an attempt is made here to focus on the iconography, iconology and the themes chosen by the artists in narrating the Rāmāyaṇa story and to probe into the probable reasons behind the selection of the specific themes that are not commonly encountered in the plastic art of South India. The cultural atmosphere in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Odisha can be gleaned through the study of the Rāmāyaṇa episodes as they throw much light on the social conditions, traditions and customary practices. Further it is endeavoured to discuss and identify certain scenes depicted in the temple at Buguda which are badly damaged with reference to the Rāmāyaṇa scenes portrayed on the walls of the Jagannātha temple at Kanchili of Andhra Pradesh State.

**Keywords:** *Ahalyā, Bharata, Dundubhi, Guhya, Hanumān, Mārīcha, Putrakāmēṣṭi*

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## Introduction

The *Virañchi Nārāyaṇa* temple dedicated to lord *Sūrya* at Buguda in Ganjam district (Odisha State) is richly decorated with colourful wall paintings that reflect the religious and ideological feelings of the people. Murals are the paintings depicted on the walls using different kinds of colours collected from plants and minerals and these can be found on the walls of the caves, temples, *maṭhas* and palaces. When the mural paintings are shown on either the inner or outer walls of the temples they

generally demonstrate the religious themes revolving around the epics or the *Purāṇas* either to extol the greatness of the deities or to educate and inspire the devotees in understanding the *Hindu* mythology and spirituality. The mural paintings in the temple at Buguda were depicted on the outside walls under the protruding eaves of the roofs by the professional artists who followed closely the illustrated manuscripts and the *paṭachitras*. Srikara Bhanja who ruled from Ghumsur in A.D. 1790 was responsible for the construction of the *VirañchiNārāyaṇa* temple. However, it is generally considered that the mural paintings were executed on the temple walls in 1820 (T.C. Rath 1911:36-38). To articulate a wide range of human expressions, feelings, sentiments, ideologies and political discourses the theme of the Indian epic *Rāmāyaṇa* has supplied the resources continuously and readily to the artists. As a result, we find the depiction of the scenes from *Rāmāyaṇa* in plastic arts and references to *Rāma* as a great hero and a king in the inscriptions even from a much earlier period than the development of the temple cult of *Rāma* during the medieval period which was very slow (R.G.Bhandarkar 1965:47; Sheldon Pollock 1990: 141). Since the epic portrays *Rāma* as the embodiment of a perfect human being both the rulers and the subjects preferred the depiction of the life and message of *Rāma* whom they worship as Lord *Vishṇu* on the temple walls as it demonstrates the respect for truth, righteousness, obedience to parents, the welfare of the people and spiritual experience. Of the wall paintings of the temple, more than half of the wall space was devoted to the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes while the rest of the walls exhibit succinctly the *Krishṇalīlas* and *Daśāvātāras* besides a large map of the Puri temple.

The pictorial narratives drawn from the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* can also be seen in the *Jagannātha* temple complex at Puri, in the *maṭhas* of Puri and the *maṭha* at Kanchili in Andhra Pradesh. Although these murals have drawn the attention of the art historians earlier who studied them briefly from different perspectives (D. Pathy 1981; Joanna Williams 1996) an attempt is made here to focus on the themes chosen by the artists in narrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* story and the probable reasons behind the selection of the specific themes that are not commonly encountered in the plastic art of South India. As there are quite a few paintings at Buguda which are yet to be identified properly it is needed to examine them in detail. Further, it is intended to analyse the iconography and iconology of the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes and to examine the popularity of certain episodes of the epic in South Odisha and Northern Andhra based on the mural paintings that adorn the temple walls in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Since the vernacular literature has been well developed by this period one can find the regional influences in narrating the story of the great hero '*Rāma*' which is somewhat different in its description from Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and this can as well be perceived from the mural paintings of the temples at Buguda and other places. The *Rāmāyaṇa* texts of *Balarāmadāsa* (*JagamōhanRāmāyaṇa* or *DaṇḍiRāmāyaṇa*) and UpendraBhanja (*Lāvanyavatī* 1977) written in Odia were very popular and probably the painters must have been inspired by these texts in decorating the walls of the temples so that the visitors can easily follow the visuals in interpreting and understanding the hidden symbolism and content by themselves.

The cultural atmosphere in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Odisha can be gleaned through the study of the *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes as they throw much light on the social conditions, traditions and customary practices. Further it is endeavoured to discuss and identify certain scenes depicted in the temple at Buguda with reference to the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes demonstrated on the walls of the *maṭha* at Kanchili. In the chart given at the end the location of the *Rāmāyaṇa* murals on the walls of the temple in Buguda are shown and the sequence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes depicted on different walls of the temple as well as the direction in which the scenes are to be viewed are described in the tabular form from Tables 1 to 8. Since the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes were portrayed in a haphazard manner in the case of the forest scenes particularly, and not in a continuous manner these will help in the better understanding of the sequence of *Rāmāyaṇa* tales. The paintings are of different sizes and in variety of shapes, i.e., rectangular and

square shaped. It seems that the artists have painted them in accordance with the availability of the wall space and of the themes of common interest. Thus some of the scenes cover the entire wall space (Plate: 5, 11, 12, 13) while the others are portrayed in narrow bands framed with lines and colour as one above another or in rectangular friezes (Plate: .1&2).

**Table 1: Rāmāyana Scenes on Wall 1 (In Ascending Order)**

	<i>Lakshmaṇa Fighting With a Demon</i>	<i>Śūrpaṇakha Praising RāMa of His Masculine Beauty</i>	<i>Rāma and Sītā Seated In Their Hermitage</i>	<i>Atri Welcomes The Exiles</i>	<i>Rāma Facing Towards Atri</i>	<i>Lakshmaṇa Shooting an Arrow Against Śūrpaṇakha</i>	<i>Śūrpaṇakha Attacks Sītā Out of Envy For her Relation with RāMa</i>
E	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
	<i>Rāma and Lakshmaṇa with a sage</i>	<i>Rāma and Lakshmaṇa bind their hair as ascetics; Sītā by their side</i>	<i>Rāma leaving to forest by chariot</i>	<i>Rāma and Lakshmaṇa with Sītā taking leave from their mothers before going to forest</i>	<i>Rāma and Sītā in palace; Lakshmaṇa paying obeisance</i>	<i>Daśaratha's encounter with Kaikēyī</i>	<i>Mandhara reminding Kaikēyī of the promises given to her by Daśaratha</i>
D	g	f	e	d	c	b	a
	<i>Boatman washes the feet of Rāma; Viśvāmitra and Lakshmaṇa on the boat</i>	<i>Rāma and Lakshmaṇa disembark the boat</i>	<i>Rāma breaks the bow and Sītā garlands Rāma</i>	<i>Marriage of Rāma with Sītā</i>	<i>Pāṇigrahaṇa scene of Rāma's marriage</i>	<i>Dasaratha paying his respect to Paraśurāma</i>	<i>Paraśurāma giving bow to Rāma</i>
C	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
B			b	c	d	e	f
	<i>Birth of Rāma and his brothers</i>		<i>Daśaratha distributing pāyasa to his wives</i>	<i>Ṛṣyaśṛṅga giving pāyasa to Dasaratha</i>	<i>Ṛṣyaśṛṅga performing the putrakāmēṣṭi sacrifice</i>		
A	d		c	b	a		

**Table 2: Rāmāyana Scenes on Wall 2 (In Ascending Order)**

A	<i>Rāma shooting an arrow against the two-headed deer</i>	<i>Rāma shooting an arrow against Mārīchā in human form while Mārīchā raises a sword.</i>	<i>Rāvaṇa (?) in the attire of a king encounters Sītā</i>		
	a	b	c		
B	<i>Jaṭāyu stops Rāvaṇa carrying Sītā in an aerial chariot by stretching its wings</i>		<i>Rāma and Lakshmaṇa carrying the dead deer on their shoulders</i>		<i>Sītā in front of the hut offering alms to Rāvaṇa who appears in the guise of an aged brahmin</i>
	c		b		a
C	<i>Rāma's encounter with Kuṁbhāsura and Kabandha</i>			<i>Rāma and Lakshmaṇa meeting the cowherd</i>	
	a			b	
D	<i>Śabari offering fruits to Rāma in the forest in front of her hut</i>				
a					

**Table 3: Rāmāyaṇa scenes on Wall 3 (In Ascending Order)**

A	<i>Hanumān</i> and <i>vānaras</i> meeting <i>Rāma</i> and <i>Lakshmaṇa</i>
B	<i>Rāma</i> kicking away the skeleton of <i>Dundubhi</i>
C	<i>Rāma</i> shooting seven trees with an arrow by straightening them in a row by trampling the body of a snake with his foot
D	<i>Rāma</i> killing <i>Vāli</i>

**Table 4: Rāmāyaṇa Scenes on wall 4 (In Ascending Order)**

A	<i>Bharata's</i> visit to <i>Rāma</i> and <i>Lakshmaṇa</i> in the forest along with his mothers, courtiers and swordsmen
B	<i>Vānaras</i> meeting <i>Rāma</i> and <i>Lakshmaṇa</i>

**Table 5: Rāmāyaṇa Scenes on Wall 5 (In Ascending Order)**

A	<i>Rāma</i> and <i>Sītā</i> on <i>Chitrakūṭa</i> hill; <i>Rāma</i> putting red colour mark on the forehead of <i>Sītā</i>
B	<i>Vānaras</i> building bridge on the Ocean

**Table 6: Rāmāyaṇa Scenes on Wall 6 (In Ascending Order)**

A	<i>Lakshmaṇa</i> straightens his arrow on his way to <i>Kishkindha</i>
B	<i>Viśvāmitra</i> and his disciple (?)

**Table 7: Rāmāyaṇa Scene on Wall 7**

<i>Rāma</i> and <i>Lakshmaṇa</i> on <i>Chitrakūṭaparvata</i> ; <i>Jāmbavan</i> , <i>Hanumān</i> and other <i>Vānaras</i> standing in front of <i>Rāma</i> with some offerings in their hands
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**Table 8: Rāmāyaṇa Scenes on Wall 8**

Death of <i>Kumbhakarṇa</i>	Battle with <i>Indrajit</i> ; Archers
<i>Viśṇu</i> represented twice	<i>Hanumān</i> with <i>Sañjīvani</i> ; <i>Garuḍa</i> in <i>añjalihasta</i>

Several scenes depicting the battle between *Rāma* and *Ravana*, the return of *Rāma* and *Śītā* to *Ayōdhya* and the coronation scenes are badly damaged and now we can find only traces of them. As the paintings were drawn on the exterior walls of the temple they were very much exposed to the natural agencies and are now in a poor state of preservation.

The mural paintings showing the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes in the temple at Buguda commence with the performance of *putrakāmeṣṭi* sacrifice conducted by *Ṛiṣyaśṛiṅga* at the request of king *Daśaratha* (Pl.1). *Ṛiṣyaśṛiṅga* alone is shown here as a youthful figure seated in *padmāsana* in front of the fire altar performing the *yāga* by putting the ghee into the fire. He is shown here with a single horn above his head perpendicular to the crown of the head which is more or less similar to the depiction of the figures of *Ṛiṣyaśṛiṅga* in sculptural art. King *Daśaratha* receives the religious offering from *Ṛiṣyaśṛiṅga* and then he turns away to distribute the same to his queens. He is shown as wearing the type of costume and turban over his head which is similar to the type of dress and turban of the *Marāṭhas* who governed the Ganjam region in the middle of the eighteenth century. The distinctive type of *Marāṭha* turban that can be described as a preformed *pagoda* with a narrow brim projecting in front is found on the head of *Daśaratha* which differs from the loosely wound type worn by some warriors and the tight turban in Mughal fashion. The artists of Buguda paintings ignored the episode of *Ṛiṣyaśṛiṅga*, his seduction by courtesans, his arrival by boat and his marriage with *Śānta*, daughter of *Daśaratha* completely while these were dealt with elaborately in the mural paintings of Kanchili

(M.KrishnaKumari 2012). In the Oriyan text *Vaidēhisa Vilāsa* written by UpendraBhanja one canto is devoted to the description of the seduction of *Ṛiṣyaśringa*.

However, it may be mentioned here that like Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, in the *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* written in Sanskrit also the legend of *Ṛiṣyaśringa* is briefly dealt with and a similar type of treatment is found in Oriya translation of *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* as it introduces *Ṛiṣyaśringa* briefly and very abruptly. In the following scenes, the artist has shown the birth of *Rāma* and his brothers and their early childhood and in this scene, the artist has shown the boys in the swings in the royal palace. In the next scene, *Viśvāmitra* is depicted with king *Daśaratha* requesting him to send his son *Rāmato* the forest to protect the sacrifice being performed by him from the attacks of demons. As *Daśaratha* has accepted the request of the sage *Rāma* and his brother *Lakshmaṇa* followed *Viśvāmitra* to the forest (Fig. 1; Pl.2). *Viśvāmitra* is shown as wearing the *ardhōrūka* that has been fastened tightly around his waist and covers his thighs. He holds a staff in his right hand and a water pot in the left hand. His hair is arranged above his head as a bundle with a top knot. His upper body is bare except

a scarf that is thrown over his shoulders. In a *maṇḍapa* like structure four sages are shown in the act of performing the sacrifice and above the flames of the fire circularly hovers the fumes. Next to the scene of the performance of the sacrifice, *Rāma* is shown as shooting an arrow against the demoness *Tāḍakī* (*Tāṭakī*) while she raises a large tree in her right hand to threaten *Rāma* and holds the bow of *Rāma* in the manner of obstructing the progress of *Rāmato* defend herself (Fig.1). When compared to the size of the figure of *Rāma* *Tāḍakī* is shown as a large figure to suggest her demonic nature as well as to indicate the fear she inspired.

The redemption of *Ahalyā*, the wife of sage *Gautama* is shown in the next scene that was turned into a beautiful woman with the touch of the foot of *Rāma* on the rocks (Fig.2). In Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* *Ahalyā* is rendered invisible rather than turned into stone (*Rāmāyaṇa* 1.47.29) *Rāma Vibha* written by Arjuna Dasa in Oriya is the first Oriya *kāvya* version of *Rāmāyaṇa* and it is dated to the sixteenth century CE. It describes *Ahalyā* as turned into a square (K.C.Sahoo 1965:252). *Ahalyā* rises from a hill of rounded lobes with her hands in *añjali* *hastā* and head bends downwards suggesting the modest pose and this contrast with the representation of *Tāḍakī* who is shown as a frenzy and demonic woman. The continuity of the story shown in the murals of Buguda concerning *Rāma*'s encounter with *Tāḍakī*, *Ahalyā* and the boatman is very much close to the sequence of scenes demonstrated in the murals of Kanchili and several texts in Orissa. In the upper tier the artists have portrayed the crossing of the river by *Rāma* and his brother (Fig. 3).

In this the boatman *Guhya* by name is shown as washing the feet of *Rāma* by pouring the water with a small pot before he steps aboard the boat and *Rāma* is shown as lifting his left leg which is flexed so that he can step into the boat. He raises his left hand holding a bow and an arrow is shown in his right hand. Sage *Viśvāmitra* and *Lakshmaṇa* are shown as seated in the boat behind the boatman. Aquatic bodies like fishes are shown in the water and water is demarcated from the land surface by thick and dark coloured wavy lines. In the following scenes, *Rāma* is shown as breaking the bow of *Siva* and his marriage with *Śītā*. Unlike the mural paintings of Kanchili wherein the marriages of four brothers were depicted here we find the marriage scenes of only *Rāma* in two paintings as conducted in a *maṇḍapa*. Next to this is shown the encounter of *Rāma* with *Paraśurāma* (Fig.4). *Paraśurāma* is depicted here twice, as he raises his right hand with *paraśu* and holds a bow in the left hand. *Daśaratha*, the father of *Rāma* is shown as dressed in royal attire facing *Paraśurāma* with his hands in *añjali* *hastā* requesting the sage not to do any harm to *Rāma*. Ignoring the appeals of *Daśaratha*, *Paraśurāma* charged against *Rāma* and very soon he realized that he was none other than his manifestation. He then presented to *Rāma* the bow (*Sāraṅga*). In the painting the whole episode was simplified and it shows *Paraśurāma*'s

initial approach to *Daśaratha* and then the presenting of the bow to *Rāma* by holding the bow with one of his hands. In both cases, *Paraśurāma* is bearded and holds a *paraśu* in his right hand and the bow in the left hand. According to Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Paraśurāma* stops the journey of *Rāma* and his family after his marriage with *Śītā* and threatens to kill *Rāma* and *Rāma*'s father begs him to forgive his son and punish him instead.

As *Rāma* proves to be equal with *Paraśurāma* in all weapons *Paraśurāma* gave him the divine bow (*sāraṅga*) and asked him to string it in which *Rāma* was successful (C.R.Sarma 1973:638). The theme of *Paraśurāma* challenging *Rāma* as narrated in *Rāmāyaṇa* is popular in painting in Orissa and throughout India as it signifies both *Paraśurāma* and *Rāma* as the incarnations of *Vishṇu* (R.T.Vyas 1995:183). However, this theme is not found in the murals of Kanchili. The other scenes that follow are *Kaikēyī* being reminded by *Mandhara* insisting on *Daśaratha* to fulfil his promises and *Rāma*'s exile to the forest. Before leaving to the forest on a chariot *Rāma* and *Śītā* were shown as taking leave from his mother (Fig.5). *Kausalyā* is shown in this scene as being consoled by two other female figures probably representing *Sumitrā* and *Kaikēyī* while *Rāma* and *Śītā* stand behind them. *Śītā* wears a long skirt and blouse and a thin veil is shown over her head. Among the mural paintings of Srikurmam also this transparent veil over the head of female figures is noticed.

In another scene, *Rāma* and his brother *Lakshmaṇa* are shown as seated on a *pīṭha* with *Śītā* under a tree and tying their hair above their heads to suggest the idea of leaving behind their royal life and accepting the ascetic life in the forest (Fig. 6; Pl.3 Table 1: D). Again the artists have shown the figures of *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* in the act of moving suggesting their progress of the movement in the forest. While this scene is not represented in the murals of Kanchili the illustrated Oriya texts like *Vaidēhisa Vilāsa* of Michha Patajoshi and *Lāvanyavatī* of Raghunatha Prusti have shown this scene (Joanna Williams 1996: Figs. 106,183). The paintings that followed in the upper tier of Wall 1 should be read from Left to Right and these include the events that took place when *Rāma* stays at *Pañchavati*. In the extreme left, *Lakshmaṇa* is shown as engaged in a dual fight with a demon and next to it is the scene in which *Śūrpaṅakhā* is depicted as standing before the house of *Rāma* with her hands raised and joined together in supplication (Fig. 7, Table 1 E b).

According to the *Rāmāyaṇa* text *Śūrpaṅakhā*, the wife of *Duṣṭabuddhi*, after she became a widower roams in the forest and visits *Rāma*'s hermitage and fell in love with him immediately. In the disguise of a beautiful woman she praised the beauty and charm of *Rāma* and asked him to marry her. In the painting, she is shown as standing before *Rāma* as a beautiful woman while *Rāma* is depicted as seated with his wife *Śītā* (Pl.4). This scene has been wrongly identified by Joanna Williams as showing *Śūrpaṅakhā* before *Rāvaṇa* although with some doubt (*ibid*, Fig. 200). Joanna Williams has attempted to read the different scenes in this long frieze on the upper tier from Right to Left and she has not identified the figure of *Śūrpaṅakhā* who encounters *Śītā* directly that enrages *Lakshmaṇa* to take action against her by taking out an arrow against her (Fig. 8, Table.1- E f & g). As it has been stated earlier the artists had not strictly adhered to present the events sequentially. *Śītā* is shown as wearing a patterned long skirt while *Śūrpaṅakhā* is shown in a saree. Behind *Lakshmaṇa* stands *Rāma* meeting sage *Atri* in the forest.

In the centre of the long frieze once again the forest-dwelling of *Rāma* made with leaves is shown in red colour background. Their residence on the *chitrakūṭa* hills and the episode of *Rāma* putting the ochre mark on the forehead of *Śītā* (Fig.9 Table 1 Wall 5 A) is closely linked to its representations found in the Oriya texts. On the other hand, this episode is not generally shown in the sculptures depicting the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes in South India. This painting is considered to be one of the best-portrayed murals of the *Virañchi Nārāyaṇa* temple in which the figure of *Rāma* is shown with a delicate waist, swelling

chest that springs forward and the facial expression that is concentrated on the main event of the episode. While putting the vermillion mark on the forehead of *Śītā* the fingers of *Rāma* are shown with remarkable sensibility. *Śītā* sits gracefully by the side of *Rāma* and lowers her head while *Rāma* puts the mark on her forehead. Her hair is arranged in a long plait and decorated with flowers. She wears a patterned blouse and both of them are shown as seated on the hills in front of their hermitage. In Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the visit of *Bharata* to see *Rāma* forms a long sequence and it emphasises the moral advice of *Rāma* to his brother (**Fig. 10**). *Bharata*'s visit to *Rāma* is shown in a large panel with several human and animal figures as well as the forest environment (**Figs.10-12; Pl.5**). *Rāma* is shown as the central figure who sits in *padmāsana* on a hill while *Lakshmaṇa* stands behind him holding bow and arrow.

When *Bharata* came to see *Rāma* who resides on the *Chitrakūṭaparvata* along with his retinue that includes his nobles, warriors, mothers and the sages (**Fig.10; Pl.5**) the artists have displayed their abilities in representing the hills with a wide variety of fauna that includes tigers, lions, elephants, bears (**Fig. 12**), boars, deer, monkeys and mules. On the other hand, the hills are shown in small circles that are placed one above the other in pyramidal order. Different types of trees, vegetation and floral patterns are shown in the half circled domes. An ascetic is shown as practising deep meditation by lifting his right leg flexed at knee and placed it over his shoulders. His hands in *añjalihasta* and the long hair that spreads loosely behind him suggest the nature of deep meditation in which he is engaged (**Fig. 12**). Not only the mountains but also the water bodies are shown in this large scene with ducks moving on the surface of the water with lotus flowers and fishes within the water. Elephants are shown as coming near to the waterways to quench their thirst while the birds are flying high to catch their prey from the water and the entire scene has been treated well with a natural forest environment. A large bear sits on a hill embracing the baby bear in a very realistic manner (**Fig.12**). The episode of *Śītā*'s abduction by *Rāvaṇa* is shown in two paintings being intervened by a painting depicting the figures of *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* carrying the dead deer on their shoulders supported by a bamboo pole.

In the first scene (**Table 1 Wall 2 B a**) *Śītā* stands in the hut with food offerings in her hands while *Rāvaṇa* stands before the hut in the guise of a Brahmin holding a staff in his left hand and a water pot in his right hand in the manner of receiving the alms (**Pl.6**). He is shown as an aged person wearing a *dhōti* that covers up to his knees and an *uttarīya* is thrown over his left shoulder to cover his upper body which is otherwise bare. He wears *yajñōpavīta* and a long beaded chain around his neck. Another scene of the same episode represents ten-headed and multi-armed *Rāvaṇa* as seated in an aerial chariot with *Śītā* while *Jaṭāyu* stops the movement of the chariot. The artist has portrayed the chariot as an open pyramidal *maṇḍapa* like structure supported by pillars with openings on all four sides, a trefoil type of arches above and a demonic face at the bottom (**Fig.14**). Small figures of seven horses are shown on both sides. In this painting, *Rāvaṇa* is decorated with *kirīṭamakuṭas* and ornaments on his body and he wears tight-fitting stitched clothes with striped designs. *Jaṭāyu* is portrayed in the form of a bird rather than as a vulture with its wings outstretched. The forest environment is indicated by a tall tree in the background.

The shooting of the magic deer by *Rāma* is shown in two different paintings in the murals of Buguda (**Pls.6 &7**) to indicate the progress of the event of killing the deer in the first instance and later the demon *Mārīcha* (**Fig. 15 & 16**). The deer is shown here as two-headed to suggest it as an illusory figure while the dead deer carried by *Rāma* and his brother is depicted only as single-headed. In the Oriya Manuscripts such as *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa* and also in *pata* paintings the deer is depicted with two long necks and small heads and appears to be almost like those of serpents. As these scenes were painted on the upper part of the wall (**Table 1 Wall 2a &b**) Joanna Williams could identify only the

two-headed deer and not the figure of *Rāma* shown on the left shooting an arrow against it (Joanna Williams 1996: Fig 200). Therefore, she states “*Rāma* shooting at the illusory deer—does not occur at Buguda” (*ibid*:88) which is not true. *Rāma* is represented again as aiming an arrow against the demon *Mārīcha* who is depicted as wearing the dress of a warrior and raising a long sword against *Rāma* (Figs. 15 & 16). Behind *Mārīcha* is shown the figure of *Rāvaṇa* and *Śītā*. But the male figure standing in front of *Śītā* has been doubtfully identified as *Lakshmaṇa* by Joanna Williams (Joanna Williams 1996:88 Wall b tier 1 Left to Right). Since the male figure is shown in royal dress (Fig.16) and also as an aged figure it would be reasonable to consider him as *Rāvaṇa* who reveals his original status before *Śītā* in connection with her abduction. *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* are shown in one painting as carrying home the dead deer after the death of the demon *Mārīcha* (Fig. 17). After realising the absence of *Śītā* in *Pañchavaṭi* *Rāma* and his brother went around the forest in search of *Śītā* and their long journey they met a cowherd man who gave them milk to drink (Fig. 18) and *Śabari* who offered fruits to them.

Later they met with *Hanumān* and *Sugrīva* who promised the brothers to help them in their search for *Śītā* provided that they, in turn, help them in killing *Vāli* the brother of *Sugrīva* who sieged the power coercively and driven them away. *Rāma* to prove his physical valour and strength before *Sugrīva* and other *vānaras* had kicked out the skeleton of the demon *Dundubhi* whom *Vāli* had killed earlier with great ease (Fig.18; Pl. 9). The painting showing this scene at Buguda conforms to the narrative of Valmiki’s *Rāmāyaṇa* which shows the skeleton of *Dundubhi*. In this connection, it may be mentioned here that in *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* it is *Dundubhi*’s head that was kicked by *Rāma* with his foot rather than the skeleton. The skeletal structure of *Dundubhi* is not presented here by the artists in natural form and it was shown very symbolically particularly in the case of the pelvis, spine, ribs and head (D.Pathy, 2001:50). In the murals of Kanchili, this scene is not represented.

In another painting, the popular episode of felling the seven palm trees by *Rāma* before killing *Vāli* is depicted (Fig. 20; Pl.9). According to the *Rāmāyaṇa* texts in Oriya language part of the strength of *Vāli* is located in the *tala* trees and they should be felled for him to die (Joanna Williams, 1996:92; Devangana Desai 1984: 79-89). As the trees are bent in different directions *Rāma* had to bring them into a single line to cut them and therefore he trampled over the tail of a snake under the trees so that he could cut all the seven trees by discharging a single arrow. The next scene shows *Rāma* in the act of shooting *Vāli*. The scene next to it occupies a large space on the wall to demonstrate *Lakshmaṇa*’s approach to *Kishkindha* at the end of the rainy season. In this painting, *Lakshmaṇa* is portrayed as seated on the hill with an arrow as a warning to *Sugrīva* that it might be used on them if he does not fulfill his promise (Fig.21; Pl.10). In the painting, *Jāmbavan* and his associate are shown as conversing with *Lakshmaṇa* who straightens the quill of the old arrow that killed *Vāli* and *Jāmbavan* is depicted in the act of removing an arrow humbly in the gesture of showing that he would stand by his word. The building of the bridge by the *vānaras* is another prominent scene painted on the eastern wall of the temple (Fig.22; Pl.11). *Vānaras* are shown in the painting carrying stones with their hands in different body stances, mostly in the act of leaping and running with stones of different sizes than in being standing in one place. They are shown as proceeding from the Right to Left direction that coincides with the movement in the direction in which the viewers proceed in circumambulation around the temple. The hills in the form of semi-circular lobes are arranged over a half-circle in a row and were carried by the *vānaras* by raising their hands high above their heads. While all the *vānaras* are depicted in profile pose only in one case we find the frontal position holding a big chunk of stone. Hills are shown below them as elongated half circles with trees and vegetation and the great ocean is rendered with several fishes and other aquatic bodies (Fig. 22). The entire scene depicts the moment of carrying stones and throwing them into the ocean in the process of building a bridge across it.



In one large painting which is fairly well preserved *Rāma* sits holding an arrow on *Suvēla* hill and behind him stands *Vibhīshana*, the brother of *Rāvaṇa* who points over his shoulder towards the direction of *Ravana*'s chariot and the broken umbrellas that looks like the flying birds are depicted (Pl.12). Behind *Rāma*, *Lakshmaṇa* sits with an arrow and in front of him stands *Jāmbavan* and four seated *vānaras*. A similar type of composition and theme can be seen in the mural paintings of Kanchili (D. Pathy 2001:Pl.60). In both cases, the hills are shown as half circles with vegetation and animal life. The remaining paintings displaying the battle between *Rāma* and *Rāvaṇa* are badly damaged and we could find only traces of them here and there. The background of the paintings showing the combat between the *vānaras* and the demons (Fig.23) as well as *Rāma* and *Rāvaṇa* are shown with an array of arrows, maces and tridents. Related to the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are the mural paintings showing the individual and iconic depiction of the figures of *Hanuman* holding the mountain, *Garuḍa* and *Viṣṇu* in standing pose. While *Viṣṇu* is depicted twice as standing with four arms similarly holding the Vaishnavite attributes facing to the front the figures of both *Hanumān* and *Garuḍa* are shown in profile. *Garuḍa* is depicted with a beak-like nose, a snake on his head and wings attached to his shoulders. He is shown as bowing his head down with hands in *añjali*hasta.

Although the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes are depicted in the form of mural paintings in several temples of South Odisha it is only at Buguda that we find the major events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story from the birth of *Rāma* to his return to *Ayōdhya*. Likewise in the *Jagannātha* temple at Kanchili in Andhra Pradesh also one can notice all the major incidents in the life of *Rāma*. While discussing the contents of the paintings of Buguda it has been attempted briefly to compare them with those of Kanchili. It shows that the murals of Buguda that belongs to an earlier period than those of Kanchili might have been the source of inspiration for the artists of Kanchili where the artists have judiciously worked out the limited wall space to cover as many of the episodes of *Rāmāyaṇa* as they can and to cover the entire story from the birth of *Rāma* up to his coronation in *Ayōdhya*. The mural paintings showing the *Rāmāyaṇa* story in the temple at Buguda of early nineteenth-century CE resemble more or less the murals of the same themes depicted on the walls of *Jagannātha* temple at Kanchili in their stylistic representation. It has been observed by D.P.Ghosh that the Buguda murals are “akin to the seventeenth century CE murals of Srikurmam temple because of the voluminous character of the line in both the temple murals” (D.P.Ghosh 1982: 156).

Although the Buguda murals were painted much later than those of the paintings of Srikurmam they display an earlier style especially concerning the sensitive, delicate and refined character of lines. For example, the fingers of *Rāma* are shown as very delicate in the scene of *Rāma* touching the forehead of *Śītā* to put the red mark on her (Fig.9). While red ochre is used mostly as the background colour for the *Rāmāyaṇa* paintings at Kanchili, chrome yellow colour is used in the murals of Buguda. Red ochre colour is shown as the background in the case of showing the interiors of the palace scenes where *Rāma* and his brothers are shown in the swings with their mothers, interior of the hermitage of *Rāma* at *Pañchavati* and in some other scenes. White colour is also used as the background which is quite unusual and this can be seen in the case of narrating the events such as *Ṛiṣyaśṛiṅga* performing the *yāga*, *Daśaratha* distributing the religious offering and *Viśvāmitra* performing the sacrifice (Fig.1; Pl.2). The other colours used in the paintings include black, white, brown, pink and green. The paintings are depicted within the coloured borders. These borders are the narrow bands filled with colours. There is no uniformity in the size and shape of the paintings. While some of the paintings are shown within narrow rectangular bands sequentially narrating the story (Table 1: Wall.1) some paintings present single events drawn from the forest life of *Rāma* covering large space on the walls (Table 1: Walls 4, 5, 6, 7). Within the long frieze of paintings, there is no demarcation from one scene to another using

any lines or borders but the progress of the narrative in sequential order and the change of the scene is suggested by the turning away of the figures after the completion of one event or episode. In the case of some of the Buguda murals, the sequential order was not strictly observed. Using very light red colour the preliminary sketch was drawn and then colours were filled within the lines and finally, the outlines were drawn in black colour. The drawings are all linear and the artists did not use the technique of shading to suggest volume and modulations. As a result, the figures are shown as flat and two dimensional. Most of the figures both human and animal are depicted in profile with bodies facing to the front with few exceptions. The full frontal view of the figures can be observed in the case of *Bharata's* visit scene in which one of the male attendants is shown in frontal view (**Fig. 10; Pl. 5**) and also showing one *vānara* completely facing to the front in the mural of the *Vānaras* building the bridge (**Fig.22; Pl. 11**).

The faces of the human figures are endowed with a sharply pointed nose, thin lips, and small mouths and in the case of male figures, long wavy moustaches are shown. The beards of the male figures are pointed at the chin. The eyes are lenticular in shape and are elongated with long arched eyebrows above them. Some of the facial features like the shape of the eyes, sharp nose, thin lips and the form of chin afford parallelism between the mural paintings of Buguda and Kanchili. The use of pink as a body colour is seen in both places. The body of *Rāma* is shown sometimes in dark as well as in pink colours. Demons, *Jāmbavan* and some *vānaras* are depicted in dark colours. The chest of the male figure is somewhat exaggerated and the waists are slender. The tilt of the face and determined movement of hands and legs convey power and some well-defined meanings. The head tilted upwards gives a deliberate and heroic cast to their deeds, while the head bent in a downward position suggests pensiveness, modesty or submissive nature. Concerning the arrangement of the hair of women, it is shown in the form of a big bun behind their necks. Long plait is also used in depicting the figure of *Sita* (**Figs. 5, 6, 8,9, 13**). Further, *Śītā* is distinguished by her dress and ornaments. Within the framework of a painting, the relational proportion between the figures is not maintained. Both the seated and standing figures are drawn at the same height. The proportion between the houses and trees, the animals and trees and the human figures and elephants are not properly maintained in the paintings. The Buguda artists had created scenes crowded with a variety of human beings and animals in narrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* story and no two persons or animals are alike in their facial expressions, dress or body stances. The painters of Buguda murals had displayed successfully their knowledge in the painting tradition through their skilful art at Buguda that represents the continuity of a tradition. In working out the *Rāmāyaṇa* themes as the mural paintings the artists had followed not only the vernacular texts of *Rāmāyaṇa* but also that of Valmiki.

### Concluding Remarks

Thus by focusing on the description as well as the discussion of some of the mural paintings of *Rāmāyaṇa* story in the temple at Buguda of doubtful identification the study throws a welcome light on the portrayal of epic scenes on the temple walls in South Odisha. By comparing the murals of Buguda with those showing the similar themes depicted on the walls of *Jagannātha* temple at Kanchili now in Andhra Pradesh State presents the spread of the regional art traditions, religion and culture. A selection of scenes from *Rāmāyaṇa* by the artists of Buguda and the elaboration of certain scenes by omitting some others reveal not only the individual preferences but also the popularity that some of the *Rāmāyaṇa* tales had obtained through the development of vernacular literature, *paṭa* paintings and performing arts. The *Rāmāyaṇa* mural paintings of Buguda had certainly played a major role in setting the standards that seem to have determined Orissan art traditions in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries since these

paintings served as models for later artists in the composition of the illustrated manuscripts as well as in rendering the mural paintings as at Kanchili.

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Appendix

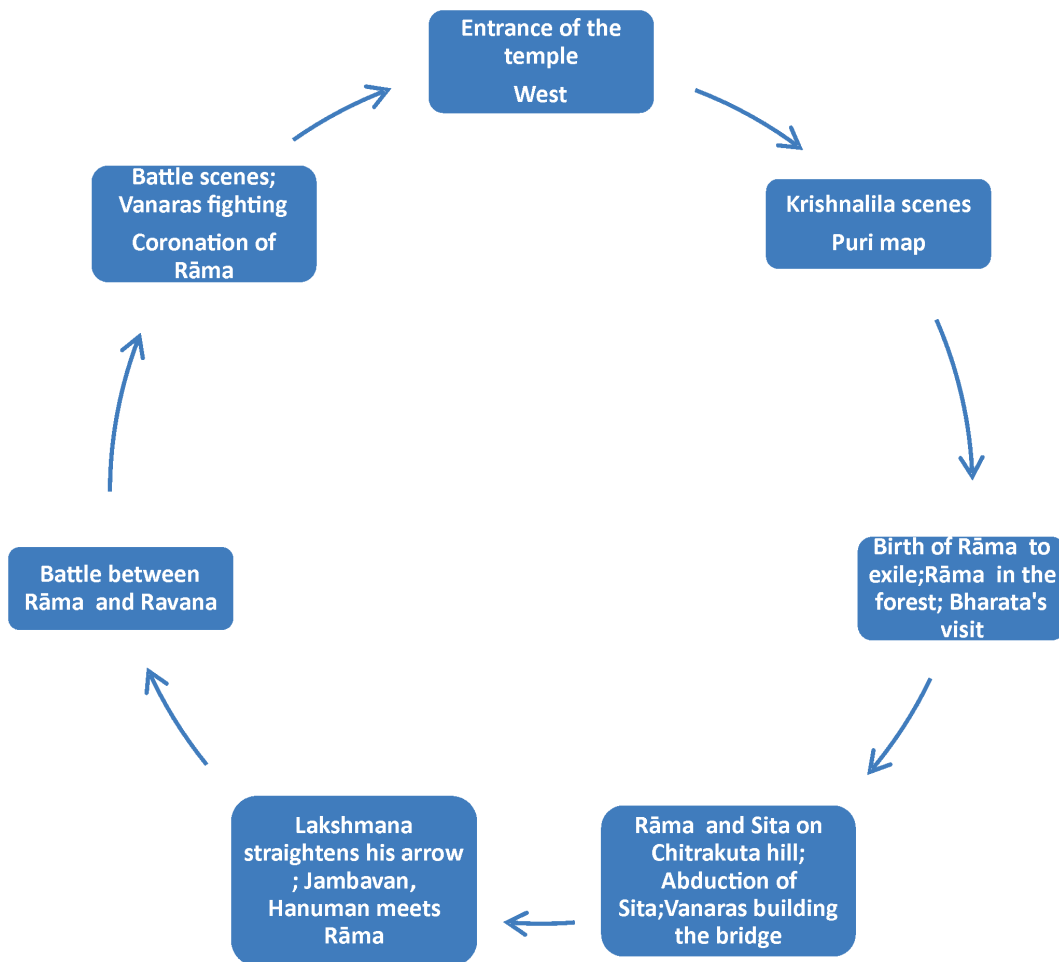


Diagram 1: Location of Rāmāyaṇa Scenes on the walls of Virañchi Nārāyaṇa Temple, Buguda



Figure 1: *Riṣyaśiṅga* performing *putrakāmeṣṭi* and giving *pāyasa* to *Daśaratha* (below); *Viśvāmitra* standing with *Rāma*; performance of *yāga* by *Viśvāmitra*; *Rāma*'s encounter with *Tāḍaki*.



Figure 2: *Rāma* liberating *Ahalyā* from rock



Figure 3: *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa*'s journey- *Guhya* washing the feet of *Rāma* before getting into the boat; *Rāma* moving ahead after crossing the river



Figure 4: *Paraśurāma* with *Daśaratha* and *Rāma*



Figure 5: *Rāma* and *Sītā* before going to the forest; *Kausalyā* being consoled



Figure 6: *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* tying their hair as a symbolism of ascetic life



Figure 7: *Lakshmaṇa* in duel fight (Left); *Sūrpaṇakha* praising *Rāma*'s charming personality



Figure 8: *Sūrpanakha attacks Sītā out of envy for her relation with Rāma; Lakshmana attacking Sūrpanakha for her encounter with Sītā; Sage Atri welcomes Rāma*



Figure 9: *Rāma and Sītā on Chitrakūṭa hill in front of their hermitage; Rāma putting a red colour mark on the fore head of Sītā*



Figure 10: *Bharata's Visit to Rāmais*



Figure 11: *Bharata's visit to Rāma and Lakshmaṇa*



Figure 12: *Jaṭāyu stops Rāvaṇa's aerial chariot while he carries Śītā to Lanka*

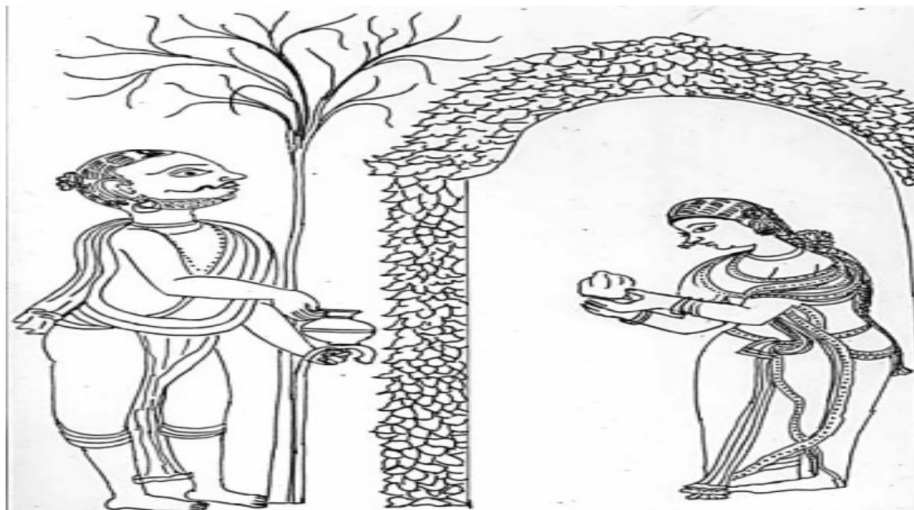


Figure 13: *Rāvaṇa in the guise of a Brahmin begging for alms; Śītā offering alms to Rāvaṇa*



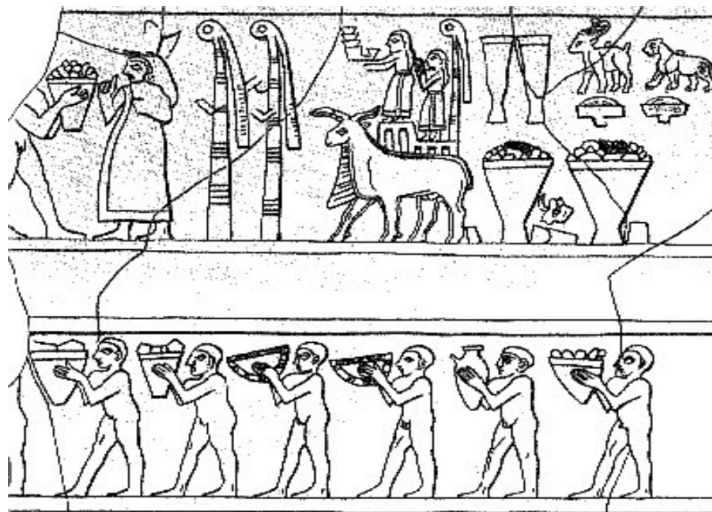


Figure 14: Chariot as an open pyramidal *maṇḍapa* like structure

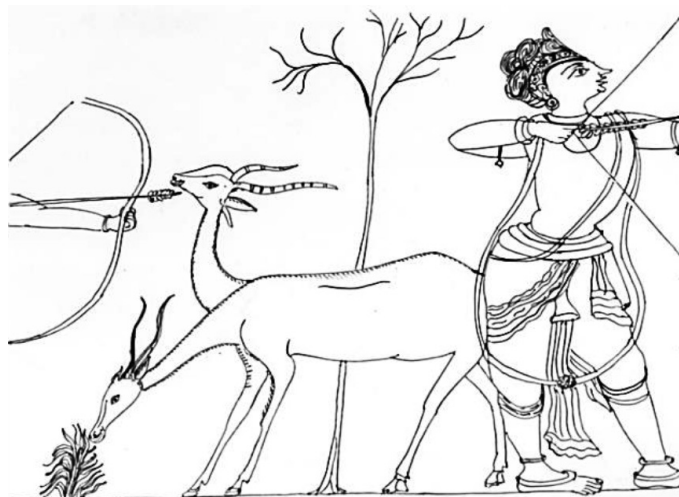


Figure 15: Shooting the Magic deer



Figure 16: *Rāma* shooting *Maricha*; *Ravana* meeting *Sītā*

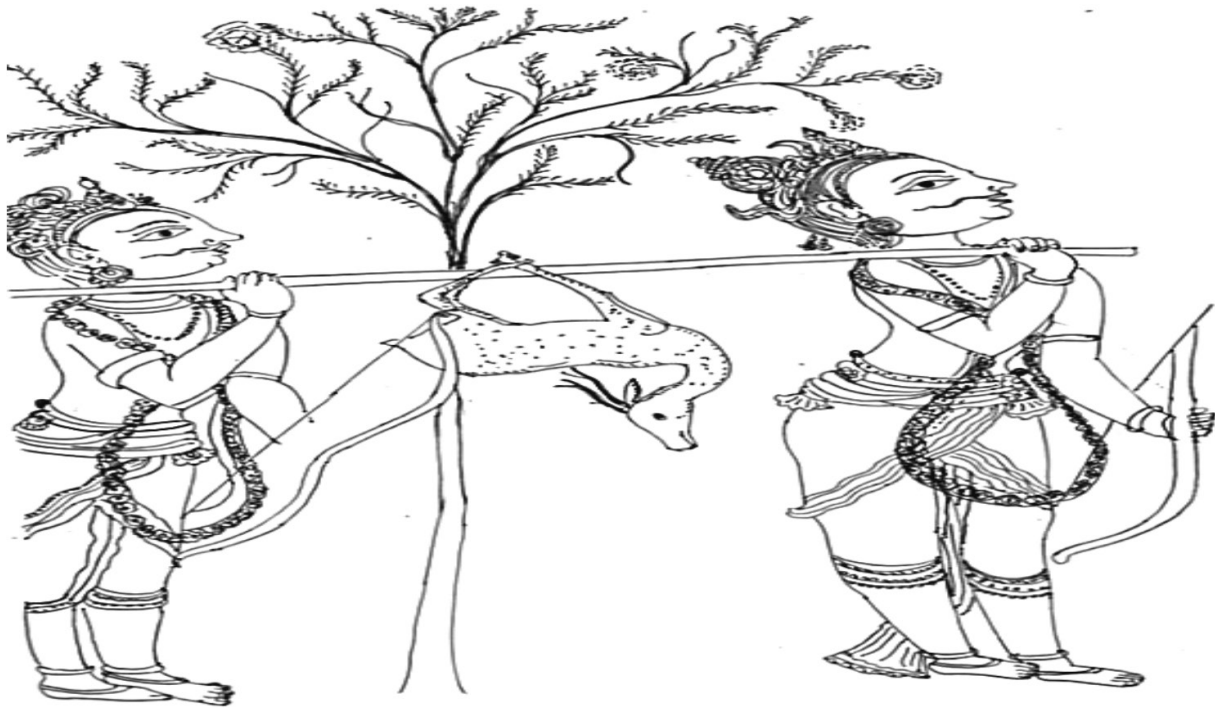


Figure 17: *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* carrying home the dead deer



Figure 18: *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* meeting the cowherd



Figure 19: *Rāma* kicking the skeleton of *Dundubhi* to prove his valour to *Sugrīva* and *vānaras*



Figure 20: *Rāma* shooting an arrow to cut across the seven trees by aligning them in a row by trampling the snake below his foot.



Figure 21: *Lakshmaṇa* threatening *Jāmbavan* by pointing an arrow



Figure 22: *Vānaras* building the bridge on the Ocean by carrying stones



Figure 23: *Vānaras* fighting with the soldiers of *Rāvaṇa* in the battle

## Photographs



Pl.1: *Ṛiṣyaśṛiṅga* performing *putrakāmēṣṭi*, *Ṛiṣyaśṛiṅga* giving religious offering to *Daśaratha*, *Daśaratha* giving the religious offering to his wives, Birth of *Rāma* and his brothers



Pl. 2: *Viśvāmītra* performing the sacrifice, *Rāma* shooting *Tātakī*, redemption of *Ahalyā* from stone by *Rāma* (Lower tier); *Sītā* garlanding *Rāma*; marriage of *Sītā* with *Rāma*, *Paraśurāma* and *Daśaratha*, *Paraśurāma* and *Rāma* (middle tier); *Mandhara* reminding *Kaikēyī* of the promises made earlier by *Daśaratha*, *Daśaratha* granting the boons to *Kaikēyī*, *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* taking leave from his mother, *Kaikēyī* being consoled (upper tier)



Pl.3: *Rāma* and *Lakshmaṇa* binding their hair



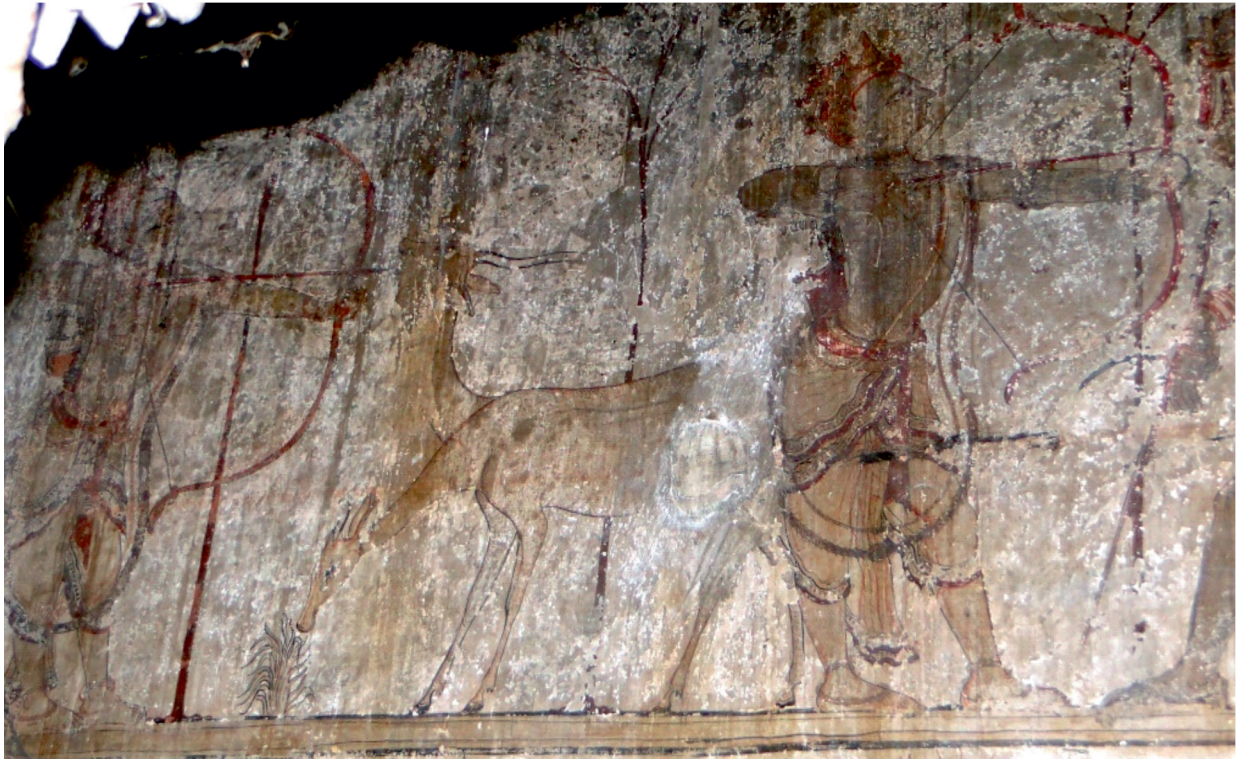
Pl. 4: *Śūrpaṅkha* standing before the house of *Rāma* and praising *Rāma* of his personality; *Lakshmaṇa* fighting with a demon



Pl. 5: *Bharata's* visit to *Rāma* along with nobles and mothers; hills as elongated semi-circular lobes with flora and fauna.



Pl. 6: *Sītā* giving alms to *Rāvaṇa* who is in the guise of a brahmin



Pl. 7: *Rāma* shooting arrow against the two headed magic deer



Pl. 8: *Rāma* shooting *Mārīcha*; *Ravana* with *Sītā*





Pl. 9: *Rāma* kicking the skeleton of *Dundubhi* (above); *Rāma* shooting an arrow across seven *tāla* trees (below)



Pl. 10: *Bharata* seated on a hill in *Kishkindha* and straightening an arrow



Pl. 11: *Vānaras* engaged in building the bridge across the ocean



Pl. 12: *Rāma* on *Suvēla* hill, *Vibhīshaṇa* pointing towards the chariot of *Rāvaṇa*



Pl. 13: *Rāma* on *Suvēla* hill, *Jāmbavan* and four *vānaras* meeting *Rāma* with offerings in their hands; note the hills as circular lobes with *vānaras*