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## Original Research Article

### Painting Analysis of “Ram and Sita MarriageAbstract”\*

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#### Abstract

Perhaps among the ancient literary works of India, the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata are more significant and are the main pillars of the country's epic literature. This epic narrates Rama's life, the beloved Dasaratha's son, Kosala land's king, in exile with his wife Sita. These two paintings are recalled as symbols of purity and happiness in Hindu tradition. Rajasthani artists have depicted a painting of the wedding ceremony of Rama and Sita, which possesses the main characteristics of Hindu art, namely an emphasis on the symbolic use of colors. This study aims to analyze the symbols and features used in this painting. The study was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method. The painters of the present work used colors to enhance the clarity of the images and have shown special attention to their symbolism. Each color has been used according to its identity, and elements such as building architecture and the arrangement of figures have been precisely positioned in the painting. The decorations and other components presented in this painting have adhered to specific principles for proper composition, guiding the viewer's eye, and maintaining the positions of the characters. The overall composition of the painting is designed to reflect the customs and traditions of wedding ceremonies in India.

**Keywords:** *Indian romantic epic, Ramayana, Rama, Sita, painting.*

#### Introduction

Archaeologists like John Hellen believe that the stories and ancient myths had roots in reality and were narrative representations of the beliefs and convictions of the people in that era. He believes that narratives were originally based on reality and later became colored with human hopes and desires, taking on unrealistic and unbelievable aspects.

This romantic work was composed by Valmiki. The composition of this work dates back to the 5th century BCE. This book, with 24,000 verses, expresses the passionate and destined fate of two lovers named Ram and Sita, symbolizing perfect and chosen individuals who, after experiencing numerous ups and downs, ultimately reunite to come

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together (Soltani, Kahdouei & Khodadadi, 2017). This anthology recounts the life events and achievements of Ram, the brave prince of Ayodhya, who saves his wife Sita from the clutches of Ravana. The artists of the Rajasthani school of India have portrayed a painting of Ram and Sita's wedding ceremony, which is full of symbolism and attention to specific details. But what are these symbols? What characteristics and details are hidden within the painting of the union of Ram and Sita? The purpose of the present research is to answer the above-mentioned questions. In this study, in addition to focusing on the romantic narrative of Ram and Sita, the existing symbols and concepts in the painting of their wedding will also be addressed. We will become more familiar with the concepts of symbols, colors, and details used in this image, by the means of examining the rituals and culture of India.

### Methodology

This study was conducted using a descriptive-analytical research design which attempts to describe phenomena and conditions accurately and completely. The researcher employed quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate variables such as differences and similarities. It is worth mentioning that the content used in this paper was collected from the documents of the National Archives and National Library.

### Review of Literature

One of the most important books and sources used in the study of the Ramayana narrative is "Ramayana: The Sacred Book of the Hindus with an Introduction, Marginal Notes, and Explanations" written by Valmiki and edited by Abdul-Wodood Azhar Dehlavi (1972), which describes this ancient Indian epic in the form of a story. "Ramayana" is one of the two great epics of the Indians, in which allegorical tales about the duties and responsibilities of family members, including brothers, sisters, spouses, and

kings are presented, and the wise teachings of India along with philosophical and religious elements are included. Furthermore, Seyed Amir Hossein Abdi, in his book "The Story of Ramayana in Persian Literature" (1964), again describes the story and events in the Ramayana and explains it from a different perspective. Mahvash Vaheddoust in the article "Ramayana, the Oldest Epic of India" (1994), compares Ram with Siavash and concludes that they were Ahuraean beings who fought against vile creatures such as Ravana and Ahriman. Additionally, Farzad Ghaemi, in an article entitled "From Rostam and Sohrab to Siavash" (2013), while recalling global patterns similar to the story of Siavash, such as Adonis, Attis, and Persephone, the story of Ram and Sita, believes that the annual rites of death and rebirth of the vegetation God have provided the groundwork for giving passionate love stories a framework with the theme of the fertile lady and the hero who becomes a martyred champion like her. Somayeh Ramazanmahi, in the article "Manifestation of the Ritual in the Image of Sita in the Fire of Ramayana Epic," (2014) explains the story of proving Sita's innocence, Ram's wife, who enters the burning fire and sits on the throne, and investigates the image. However, no research has directly focused on the analysis of the painting of Ram and Sita's marriage so far.

### Theoretical Foundations

#### • Indian Epic

Opanishads' thoughts weren't literally understandable for normal people; therefore, alongside the works of Brahmanism, another literature was created that was accessible to everyone and could be used by the masses. This popular literature grew on the margins of the Brahmanic anthology and eventually produced the epic 'Mahabharata.' Undoubtedly, this epic was considered to be an encyclopedia of the beliefs of that era. Ramayana belongs to the period of the Indian epic, which is categorized as follows: Itihasa (originally),

Akhyana (legendary stories), Purana (ancient sacred legend), and Kavya. The epic Ramayana belongs to this category. However, Mahabharata is apart from the natural group and occupies a significant place in the first genre (Shayegan, 2014, 236-235).

#### • Summary of the Ramayana

The epic tells the story of Rama and Sita, as well as the war between Rama and Ravana. It describes it in detail. The book combines heroic, romantic, and epic narratives with metaphors and philosophical questions. It interprets common laws and Hindu rituals through descriptions. The epic Ramayana consists of seven volumes:

- 1-Bal Kand: Ram's childhood
  - 2- Ajodhya Kand: Ram's exile period
  - 3- Bankand: Ram's life in the forest
  - 4- The Ramblers
  - 5- Sandrakand: The Hun went to Lanka and set fire.
  - 6- Lankand: War and Battle
  - 7- Uttarakhand: The final period of Ram's life, exile and descent of Sita to the underworld, Ram's ascension to the higher realms and division of the kingdom among his sons (Valmiki & Tulsidasa, 2000, 9).
- The Ramayana is composed of the word "ram" and "ayeneh", which mean "safe haven" or "peaceful refuge". In Sanskrit literature, it is called "Ady Kavya" meaning the first anthology. Its antiquity, style, and type of writing have placed it in the ranks of Hindu scriptures, and it has never been a work comparable to the influence, fame, and acceptance of the Valmiki Ramayana (Vaheddoust, 1994, 34). The story of Ram and Sita's marriage begins in Avedeia, a kingdom called Raja Jassert. Raja had no son. After much effort, God gave the king sons, one of whom was the heir to his throne. A lot of time passed before the king came to serve and said, I want to sacrifice, but the wicked court will not allow me to do so. I ask you to accompany Ram and Lakshman with me so that the victim can be done and your sons will take a great negation. The king was upset to hear Abed's words and said: "they are both young; I will give

you whatever you want, my wealth and my life, but not my children". Abed explained that Seri Ram is different from the rest of the human beings; he has a special power. Hearing the explanations, the king calmed down and said: "take care of my children like a father." Rarahi's children traveled and two brothers began their journey (Goldman & Sutherland Goldman, 2021). Abed taught them archery. After traveling a long way, Beswameter arrived and said: "The ruling Raja Jenk invited you to watch Swanber, it is better for you to come with us". Lakshman and Ram made their way to Besamter and met the ruler Rajah Jank after arriving in the city. The ruler was very pleased to see the two brothers and asked: who are they? Besameter said they were Rajah Jassert's sons and came here due to my request. Then Beswameter, Abedan, Serie Ramchandar and Lakshman went to Shikla city. After arriving in the city, people were talking about their beauty. On the order of one of his companions, Ram went to the temple and prayed that Sita would become his wife. Meanwhile, a sweet woman started talking to Sita, saying; Although meditation is full of courage, seeing these two brothers is also important. Look it up and ask Behvani to be in the shadow of their dignity. Sita went to the temple again. Prostration needed to be fulfilled and the definition began to meet his heart. Sita and Ram saw each other in the woods, and they fell in love with each other (Panipati, 2009, 121). Raja Jenk arranged a ceremony where all the heads, elders of the city, and the officials, Besameter, and two brothers attended the ceremony. Everyone was talking about Sita at the ceremony, and one of them was going to propose to her and said: Raja Jenk has a daughter named Sita, all of whom say that she is raised from the heart of the earth and is a symbol of glory and beauty. The arch of Royin Mountain is at that place, which represents the pride of the Pahlavan people on the earth. It was made by Sukerma and was in the control of Mahadioji for a while. Then Raja Jenk the king declared that anyone who could break

the arch would marry Sita. They asked Ram to go to the mountain and destroy the arch. He went near the arch, and he was able to break the arch successfully. The king was very happy and ordered his men to build a house for Sita and Ramachandra in Mehtla city. Ram and Sita came to each other after going through different events.

## Discussion

### • Ramayana painting

The Indian subcontinent has always been the origin of myths and stories that have had a significant impact on the Indian people's education. One of the common genres is love stories expressing the profound effect of Persian literature and its rich culture (Zolfaghari, 2010, 50). In India, each region has its own Ramayana language. The language of each region attempts to present the glory and grandeur of the scenes and events of this epic and the features of their stories through various forms of art. The rulers of each state considered themselves as subjects of the royal race and that is why the epic Ramayana was more popular among them. Sahibdin, the main painter of the court, was preparing precious copies. Sahibdin, One of these works is the illustrated version of Ramayana. First of all, creators abandoned the vertical structure of the page, which was seen in Mongolian and European art, and followed the tradition of horizontal painting or yarn leaf, which has a long history in Indian painting. Another characteristic of these paintings, which distinguishes them from Mongolian painting, is the nature of their story because each work is associated with several stories and narratives. All of these features, along with rich coloring, and the implementation of astonishing details have made it unique (Dehejia, 1997, 346-351). Later, in Goller palace in the Himalayan region, during the 18th century, a new style of painting developed and became a special one at the end of this century. One of the best examples of this style, known as Gularkangra, is the Sri Lanka Siege Collection, which portrays only

one season of Ramayana (Craven, 1990, 3-5).

### • Rajasthani Painting (Miniature) school

Impressive Indian works, such as the Ramayana saga, were later depicted by Indian artists. This book is depicted in Rajestani school, whose illustrated version is now kept in the National Museum of India. Rajestani's painting school has different styles such as the Ramagala painting, which tried to express the religious and social traditions of this region. The painting art here is full of symbolic elements, so it can be studied from two aspects: aesthetics and sociology. For this reason, religions such as Hinduism generally express their religious concepts with different codes and symbols. Ram and Sita's marriage is painted in the Rajestani school of India. It is similar to the marriage of Homay and Homayoun and enjoys various symbols related to the painting traditions of that era. In in this section, it's trying to In this section, an attempt has been made to interpret the Rajasthani school and the symbols in this painting .Ananda Coomaraswamy is a researcher who coined the term «pots of Rajput» in 1916 in the support of most Rajput rulers. Particularly, he categorized and distinguished this school from the famous Mughal painting school (Coomaraswamy, 2002, 22). For Coomaraswamy, this name shows the indigenous tradition of painting common in the mainland before the Mongol conquest. Choice of colors (brilliant or gentle); hybrid elements (architectural image, faces, and nature); narrative styles, and the desire for naturalism or the emphasis on extreme behaviorism are the prominent features of this style. One of the main characteristics of Rajput's main illustrator is its strong linear design and rich colors. The paintings are quite symbolic and full of poetic metaphors because Hindus believe that integrated life is allegory. Thus, art is an interpretation of life that is only validated by expressing deep and hidden meanings (Pakbaz, 1995, 953). Common topics used in this style include characters such as "Rama" who is the epic hero "Ramayana" and "Krishna" the eighth manifestation

of » Vishnu « in the form of blue figurative, commanders, and heroes. The kings and nobles of Rajput are a sign of the Lord of Brahma's birth, the generative power of the gods, and the rotation of the Lion's sea (*ibid.*, 954 & 953). The existence of stability, and unanimity in the composition and other technical and visual features of these images, shows that this style of painting originated from an ancient tradition and has roots in Danesh. To clarify the technical characteristics of construction in Rajput paintings, the following notes can be mentioned:

- The most striking quality of these paintings is their brilliant colors, which in terms of transparency are only comparable to the colors used in enameling. Although these images are drawn on matte and dyed backgrounds, the pure and brilliant red, yellow, pink, green, and brown colors which are placed alongside a pure white and pale black give these works a special clarity (*ibid.*, 176).

- Unlike Iranian paintings, which are rich in silver and gold colors, gold is not used in Rajput paintings, although these paintings have a strong design, the color as the essence of these works, is the dominant element. In other words, these images cannot be imagined without color (*ibid.*, 177 & 178).

#### • Ram and Sita's marriage graphic analysis

The existing picture of Ram and Sita's marriage is kept in the National Museum in India, but there is no accurate information about the creator of this work. According to the sources mentioned in the Art of India, the owner of this work is unknown. This work was created in the early 18th century. The technique used in this work was painting matte watercolors on paper in the artistic form of the Pahari style in the Himachal Pradesh region. The dimensions are 22.6 \* 32.4 cm. Next to the picture of Ram and Sita, who are the main faces, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatterghna can be seen. This miniature portrays the marriage of four Ayodi princes with the princesses of Mityl and Sankasya (*Fig. 1*). The main figures of Ram and Sita are clearly located under the traditional Mandapai,

which is made with saffron color bars covered with auspicious banana trees. Ram and Sita, along with the other princes of Ayudia and their fiancée, wrap around the fire of the sacred ceremonies. Shy brides are lame in their footsteps and are supported by royal ladies while the princes are making great and powerful strides. Instead of carrying the bows to which the narrative is concerned, the artist portrayed the groom carrying orthogonal swords that sheath in the red velvet frame in contemporary tradition. The ceremonies are witnessed and consecrated by priests on both sides of the Tabernacle. The left-hand shape of the figurines is presented with full broiler profiles and large, staring eyes in a striking manner, prominent arched eyebrows, sharp noses, and round chin. The use of gold in the painting of this area is considered to be an external and imported phenomenon and only became common in the late history of Rajput painting. The yellow color used in the field gives the painting a shine, and the crazy riot of colors meeting in intense dance is equally brilliant. The artist plays with colors, the yellow patka (the belt) with its stripes of pale blue and white, by the bright orange robe that Rama wears with blue skin, give clarity to the picture. The whiteness of their eyes shines on his dark skin, such as the pearl ornaments placed in his ears and neck, and the delicate decorative motifs painted on his forehead. The artist replicates this contrast of orange and blue supplements in other parts, for example: in the form of orange jumpsuits in the image versus the bright blue background in the doorway at the bottom right. This combination has even been used in cheerful parts of clothing. The surface of the picture in these works is divided into large sections, often performed in simple and uniform colors. It is the same background color that gives identity to the surfaces in the painting (*Fig. 1*). Color is always considered to be a significant element; in general, the works of this era cannot be interpreted without colors. Color is the main and key component of Indian culture and religion. Hinduism, according to its own





Fig. 1. Ram's and Sita's Marital Illustration, Ramayana's Romantic Epic by Wal Mickey, Painter: Unknown, Early 18th Century, Matte Watercolour, Volumetric Edition located in the National Museum of India. Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/The\\_marriage\\_ceremony\\_of\\_Rama\\_and\\_Sita.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/The_marriage_ceremony_of_Rama_and_Sita.jpg).

symbolism, has a special sanctity for a large number of colors. Symbolic colors in Hinduism include red, orange (pharaoh), green, yellow, white, black, and blue. All of these colors are used in Ram and Sita's marriage pictures. Since Ram was originally the Lord of Vishnost Kirst Kirst, Derekbaldi Anas Morafani, his body is always in blue, which is heaven's color and special to the gods and the spiritual goddesses of Moravant. A god who is brave and can deal with all the difficulties is usually pictured in blue. Therefore, the two Gods Rama and Krishna who have spent their lives protecting humans are usually represented in blue (Taheri, 2018, 136 & 152) (Fig. 2). The azure color used in the painting is complementary to the orange color (photography) of the image field and makes the elements of the picture better to be seen, the symbol of infinity, power, and nature. This color is mostly used

in spiritual spaces and ceremonies (Hezareei, 1984, 91). Indians believe that red is a symbol of fertility and purity. Therefore, this color is used in ceremonies such as marriage, and the birth of Indian children. To Indians red is the symbol of purity. The frame around the picture space and people's clothes at the ceremony are red for this reason. They believe that the wedding dress should be in red. A red dress with bright colors and gold embroidery symbolizes commitment to life, spirituality, and fertility. Sita's dress as the bride is red as well. Orange (Saffron color) is known as the holiest color among Indians. It is considered to be a symbol of fire, and they think fire destroys evil. It is also a symbol of purity, religious austerity, and the symbolic color of the faithful people. It reflects the concept of love. The white color is valuable in Hindu culture. It shows purity, and in contrast to yellow and



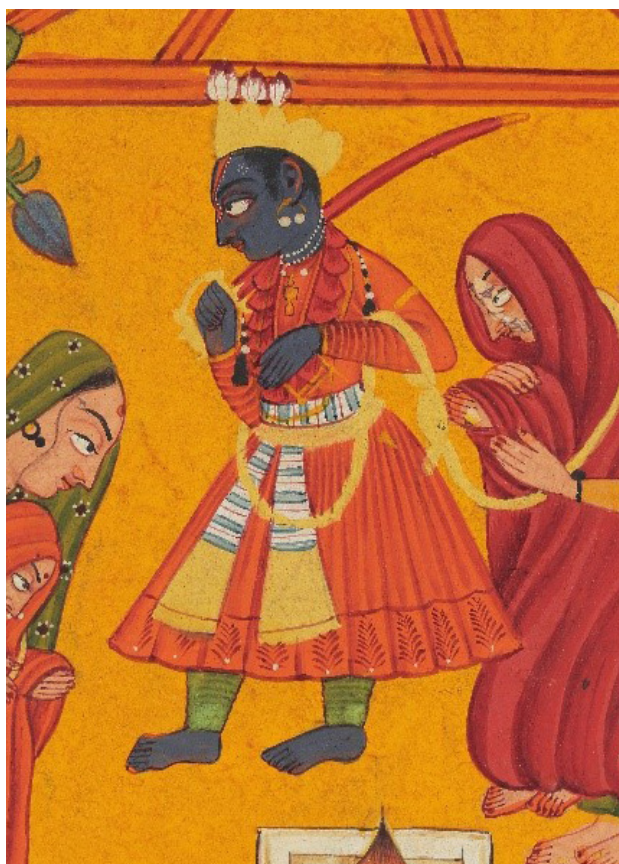


Fig. 2. Ram at the wedding ceremony, Ramayana's romantic saga by: Wal Mickey, Painter: Unknown, early 18th century, Matte watercolor, volume version located in the National Museum of India. Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/The\\_marriage\\_ceremony\\_of\\_Rama\\_and\\_Sita.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/The_marriage_ceremony_of_Rama_and_Sita.jpg).

red, it represents peace and tranquility (West Oregon University, 2012). In this painting, colors are chosen smartly according to the Indian culture, and instead of making the human beings excited, they force them to ponder and think. The utilization of bright colors is only comparable to the colors used in Iranian Enameling art; other items indicate the adherence to a common tradition in Indian painting techniques. It distinguishes works from Iranian paintings. The artist completes this passion of colors with the actions and movements of heroes and energizes the painting.

The placement of the drum players, who are heavily pounding and playing, and the women who are in front of the lilac booth on the right, clapping and singing, are conducting the eye out of the frame. The simplicity of the spaces and the eye-catching

decoration of the pictures represent the contrast. The creation of a royal space shows the accuracy of the creator which displays the beauty, attention, and simplicity of the position of the sculptures. In general, the distinction between shapes, darkness and brightness, shortness and height of the figurines, and the continuous movement and rotation of the eye in the image from the top down, from the component to the whole, from stillness to dynamism demonstrates consistency and unity among the components of the picture. Gestures, and tilting of heads and eyes, makes the revolving and tumbling around the fire. Architecture with playful imaginations, asymmetrical decorations on the turrets, the peaks of the stall structure on the left, and the central tent which flows freely, without the margin are provided (Fig. 3).

Ram and Sita walking around the fire at the marriage ceremony reveals the traditional customs in India. The wedding ceremony is held around a fire called Agni or the Sacred Fire, which makes the couple's bond stable and durable, along with the bride and groom walking around the fire, the Hindu cleric starts to sing the orad, and the religious hymns from «oda», «griasotura» and «mazitis». Walking around the fire causes the eye to rotate in the image, and the circle among Indians symbolizes time, the continuous and circular motion of the sky that is associated with Deity (Hohenegar, 2013, 31). The tree, in many ancient peoples, is worshiped as the place of God and in some cases even as God himself. It is also a symbol of the cosmos the source of fertility and a symbol of eternal life and knowledge. It is adapted from nature and represents realism. Because of the tree's connection with the earth, the spirits often associated the trees, European tribes and Indians imagined them among the Babylonian Madina. Buddha became Buddha under the tree. There was a global axis or cosmic tree and it was later symbolized as a stupa (Hosseiniabadi, 2014). One of the symbols of the God Vishnu is the tree, which has led to the sanctity of the trees. Indians hold their important ritual ceremonies in the presence



of the trees. In this picture, there are four trees on the sides and the ceremony of turning around the fire is done under these trees. Ram and other men's swords and the weapons in the picture represent their power and strength. The artist has completely demonstrated the tradition of customary painting in his era using colors, architectural spaces, the faces of present persons, and the decorations of clothes (Table 1).

### Conclusion

Indian Rajastani school artists have portrayed the wedding ceremony of Ram and Sita Graphic, which is all about symbolizing and paying attention to specific details and points. But what are these symbols and features? The results of reviewing pictures express the symbols and the characteristics of the painting of Ram and Sita's marriage. This work is done in the Rajastani school



Fig. 3. Women's Drums at Wedding, Ramayana's Romantic Epic by: Wal Mickey, Painter: Unknown, Early 18th Century, Matte Watercolor, Volumetric Edition located in the National Museum of India. Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/The\\_marriage\\_ceremony\\_of\\_Rama\\_and\\_Sita.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/The_marriage_ceremony_of_Rama_and_Sita.jpg).



Table 1. Review of the symbols of each color and the context in which it is used. Source: Authors.

Color	Symbol	Context
Red	-Love -Joy -Purity	-As well as red wedding dresses, which symbolizes commitment, purity, spirituality, fertility
White	-The holiest color -Austerity -Purity	-Color of holy people -Represents love
Orange	-Purity	-In contrast to yellow, this color indicates calmness/peace

and signifies one of the stories of Ramayana the Indian Romantic Saga by Valmiki, that shows the Indian culture and symbols. Decorative elements and the position of individuals are specified in this painting. Replicating colors, each with a symbol, are visible in this painting; such as the frequent use of red, white, and yellow colors. Orange, which falls into the category of symbolic Indian colors, as mentioned previously, red symbolizes love, happiness, and purity. This is the reason for the red wedding dress in India which symbolizes commitment, purity, spirituality, and fertility. White is the most sacred color among Indians. White is referred to as the color of holy people and represents love. Orange versus yellow represents calmness. The artist addresses his purpose through objects. The clothes and skirts are painted mostly tall, which follows the tradition of Chinese painting. The painted lines show heaviness and static. They are formal and out of excitement, but by maintaining the rhythm of some figurines, it is getting out of a formal state, such as drummers, which display mobility and dynamism in the lower frame. Eye continuity and rotation, using decorative elements such as candlesticks and trees are preserved in this painting. The symmetry in the picture induces the existing unity between the objects, and all the elements together express the meaning and concept of their unity. In the present research, all of the following concepts, their values, and details were discussed: Cautious attention

to the principles of painting; such as showing distance and proximity through the small and large drawings of figurines; the importance of placing colors together; paying attention to the details and customs related to the wedding ceremony: for instance going around the fire, that shows continuation between the bride and groom; Hajla ceremony that reveals the bride's chastity; the existence of life's tree in the picture; red wedding dress; presence of drum players.

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