The Ramayana is one of the world's longest, oldest, and most admired epic poems. First composed in India over 2,000 years ago and now some 24,000 couplets long, the Ramayana describes Prince Rama's marriage to Sita, their banishment, her kidnaping, her rescue, and their reunion. Apart from its popularity in India, the epic is well known in other parts of Asia, including Indonesia (especially Java) and Thailand.

Although the bulk of what follows is pure fantasy, I have made factual references to the Ramayana and Asia. To name a few: "De­wi" means goddess in Javanese, "sitar" is an Indian musical instrument, "amah" is widely used in Asia to mean nanny, "Sala" is a Javanese court city, "oolong" is an Asian tea, Rama IV was the real-life king in "Anna and the King of Siam," "noh" is a Japanese form of drama, and all of the Indonesian words and phrases used are authentic.

References in French, German, Italian, and Spanish are also real. So are the names of an author and his book ("Emile Zola," "Nana"), a movie ("Amarcord"), a singing group ("Abba"), songs ("Rama Lama Ding Dong," "Arriverderci Roma"), a medieval anti­Papist ("Anabaptist"), and a Philippine island ("Samar"), among other examples. Other wordplay includes puns on cliches ("a new broom sweeps clean," "a horse of another color") and fruit ("plum," "pear," "honeydew melon," "papaya," "cantaloupe"). Finally, among young middle-class females in California's San Fernando Valley, "grody to the max" means extremely gross.

For the reader's convenience, I have written in capitals all palindromes (separate, contiguous, or overlapping) that are at least five letters long; underlined the words "Rama" and "Ramayan" (spelled forwards or backwards); and used italics for two versions of a "charade phrase" (see Dmitri Borgmann, Language on Vacation, p. 112) in which a string of 38 letters is respaced and repunctuated to mean different things.

* * * * *

Many centuries ago in IndiANA, AN American Indian boy married an Indonesian girl. People called him Sid, but he was really MY NONANONYMous, eponymous Indian epic hero Rama. Her real name was Dewi Sita, but Sid usually called her Anna. For example, at the ceremony to seal the nuptial pact: "ON DIS DIAS," SAID SID — NOT capable of hiding his accent, for Sid, SAW ANNA ("WAS it
Aramaic?" she wondered now), was a wee to excited for that — "I wanna wife, I do! O divine Anna, my manna from heaven! That is, I wed dewi Sita!"

Just before this Anna-Sid liaison, Anna's mom remarried. From his pictures and letters, Anna's mom announced, Anna's mom saw, was an extremely beloved, devout old Hindu named Otto. Demanding to meet this gentleman, namelessly Otto, Sid and Anna, newly wed, dewy-eyed, went to Java to stay with Anna's pets, stepdad, sitar, amah, and mom in the royal court city of Sala. alas! For there Anna erred in trying to introduce Sid to one of Java's avant-garde, underpaid art traditions: the coloring of batik skirts, shirts, and bandanas.

Anna's and Sid's dismal conversation, in the Indonesian language, follows:

"Anna, ada apa malam ini?"
"Ini, Sid: kita batik. Aku suka."
"Batik? Ini? Ini kitab!"
"Aku suka kita batik."
"Disini, ini malam, apa ada, Anna?"

Tammat

which, translated, means:

"Anna, what's happening tonight?"
"This, Sid: we're going to color some batik cloth. I'd like to."
"Batik? This? This is a holy book!"
"I want us to color batik cloth!"
"Is there any here tonight, Anna?"

The End

But it was just the beginning. Because Sid had confused a mere material with one of the Hindus' holiest MSS., Anna's stepdad bridled and swept the new groom clean out of the mansion. Anna 'n' Sid, disinherited, reviled, delivering themselves over to the Devil's lived evils, lived in exile in the forest for many years, drinking tea. The rest of the tale is oolong to tell here.

Rehashing these happenings shows how they mirrored (derogatorily) the stepfather's holy book, the Ramayana (translated as "Rama's Way"), a wise chef d'oeuvre written in verse-lyric Hindu, always! decades before this newer reversion, rewritten inversely, rich in dual ways, decadent, and renowned as the Palindramayana ("Rama's Way Back"), after which, for the scholar, loads of more ore-loads of odes in more modern modes are modeled. (OM! Erased out of existence by time and termites were many MSS, my name rewarded be for salvaging others.)

Recent renditions of the Ramayana worth reciting include releases such as a hefty Spanish-language tome emotionally retitled "A bad-Spanish Upamishad" by SrA. Lola "La La" Lamar, a

MALadjusted, I, publishing love". (Well raved. "The one who normally says 'Nay'...")

Los Angeles A Decadent Queen (Anna, their teeth outward, position)

In equal "le Ramayana up to Far!, couple wandering the forbidden Cheri! Anna's lemon, the do 'n' not elope, so that...

Eldestly as a medic in Baptist, "their own kind.

LORama 111

NADir-il "Fra Rama RenEder in Rabat". NAIle, Nadi il's, Rabat's really strictly for a letter in Rabat, songs - all, ADDIS ABAI.

A revision seeking nothing the television ALL" as the sponsored MÓre or less...

AS a in German NEVER mind.

Then came...
for that - heaven! That's married. From house, Anna named Otto. From Anna's PETS, to one of coloring of

I'd like confused "ANNA'S MANsion." I'd like

Los Angeles movie moguls, modernizing the myth, produced A DEcadent, R-rated, Anna-mated cartoon musical, "Rama and the Queen (Anna IV) of Siam," which the censors in BANGKOK gnashed their teeth over and finally banned as A CASE of "negatively forward, positively backward" lesse majeste.

In equally dubious taste were the softcorn popcorn French films, "Le Ramassage D'Anna," Degradingly subtitled "From Forest Pick-up to Parlour Girl," and "ELLE, Rama, L'AMARELLE," in which the couple wake up in a garden, down, taste RAM's Amaretto, bite the forbidden bitter cherry, and sing the theme song, "Rama, Mon Cheri! Anne, Ma Banane!" In the latter movie, a less-than-sublime "Happy Mon Cheri", the apple-cheeked, plum-tuckered pair sings requests ("Honey, Do 'Melancholy Baby or 'O Mein Papa, ja?"); but they can't elope, so their love proves fruitless.

Elderly American fundamentalists ill-advisedly portrayed Sita as a medieval anti-Papist sinner in the CinERAMA release, "Anna, Baptist," while Muslim skating enthusiasts in BagHDAD hazarded their own productions, "Iraq in ROLLORAMA," "ROLLORAMA," "ROLLORAMA," and "RAMADAN ANNA." -- - --

Nadir-in-Agadir Studios then filmed two musical extravaganzas, "Fra Rama, Marabout" and "The Moroccan Accord," with Rama Rendered as a Catholic monk who becomes a Muslim missionary in Rabat (A Barn is his "kamar" - Rama's "room" in Indones-Ian), nails together Android DiORAMAS (A Marketable item among Rabat's robots), makes a pile in rugs, and flogs golf shirts, STRictly FOR PROFIT. Later, Rama moves his sale to Tel Aviv. "A LETTER FROM ANNA," "MOROCCO Romance," "DEAR Sita," "BARN IN RABAT," "ISRAELI LEARjet," and "Don't BAR AN ARAB" were hit songs - ABBA sang them - in France, Morocco, Rome, Cairo, and Addis Ababa; "SID, DAD, 'N' Sita" never caught on, however.

A Revealing but gross ASSASSination of Sita's SATISfaction-seeking Nighttime ways (and of Rama's SamariTan Attributes) was the televised docudrama, "Anna's AnnaIs - A Motel Courtesan Tells All," as luridly told to Ramada Nana, A.K.A. Emily ("Ma") Zola, sponsored by Mazola Oil and Mobil Oil on television station WOW from noon more or less nonstop to four AM.

As a Markedly libellous version, "RamanandaR ANNA," Redone in German with Rama as a cuckolded dwarf, exceeded even WOW, never mind Agadir, in poor taste.

Then came "MAMA LLAMA Meets Rama," A Marimba march played
in SID'S DISco in Lima by a Peruvian rock group, TRAGIC CIGAR, That took WILD Liberties with history, and hers TOO. NOO! - This was sham art, a mare's-nest, a marplot's scam, A RAMA-MARRing RAT'S NONsTARTer, AN ART-loVER'S REVERSAL, ALAS, a martyrdom of sensibility, anti-ART, A TRAmpolining on good taste, in SUM, A MUSical film-FLAM, A RAMA-Libeling, all WET, A CATERwauling cultural Waterloo of the first water.

But there is a worse version in averse verses - curses! - even perverser than these ... an EVEN more irREVERent rendering ... grody to the MAX! ... A Mess INDEED ... Nightmarish fake-ART ... A TRAvesty surpassing even the transvestite soap opera "I Remember MAMA RAMA" ... More hypercommercial than even A climb-a-Filipino-NIPA-PALM, LAP-A-PINot-noir, roundtrip-island-getaway TO "RAMA'S SAMAR" ... O Tempo, o more - how careSs! ... A MASS-media massacre that actually outDID Tokyo-KYOTO-TOYOTA Video-CASETTES' SACreligious NOH TELEthon - Starring Tamio (''ToMATO') TAMARA - "RAMA'S AMorous Nurse: A Bedpanorama".

That final insult to our hero - MEMORY O' RAMA! ROyalty into royalties! - was recorded Recently on an oddBALL LABEL, AmaroCORD ROCK-A-RAMA RAgtime REmember-When Records, for America's Italian nostalgia market, by HANNAH and the Ramapithecans. They even invented a new character, a MONOManiac named EdGAR, A GauchE GARAGE GIGOLO, GIgantic and greasy, who repairs FLAT'S TAllpipeS in a plAZZA in Rome, etc.


These HOODOos, these chEAP PAEans to Anna's high infidelity, in high fidelity, are: "ANNA, EdGAR, RAMA: AMARRages, Italian-style," and, on the flip side, "Arriverderci, Rama".

Basta la pasta! Enough is enough. JAVA Jive-men, CAVE-EVACuated, the prehysterical Ramapithecans have gone too far for me. WERE WE Merely to show HIM DIS DISC, SID'S 1D MIGHT, in fact, sink through his BOOTS. OTTO'S TOO. And they would be far calmer than Rama's mama! (Remember her relaPSE-RESPonse to the "R 'N' R" EarBender, "RAMA LAMA Ding Dong," back in 1961?)

In fact, Rama (Sid) REVEREd SitA (ANNA) And let her have her way (Sita's WAY: ANNAYANA). YA, marriage should be open, in SID'S EYES. DIS was not true of us wife, however. ANNA REVenged SID'S DISloyalty, even if Sid was royalty: thus, IN RE SITA'S, ANNA'S, 'AT IS, 'ER Nibs' reaction to RAMA'S A-MARitial ricocet romance with NAOMI - MOAN! - well ... that was a divorce of another dardull.