

# PALINDRAMAYANA

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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: "De-wi" 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 anti-Papist ("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 "Ramayana" (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.

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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'S ANNounced spouse, AnNA SAW, WAS AN extremely beloved, DEVOut old Hindu NAMED OTTO. DEMANding to meet this gentLEMAN, NAMELy 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 writ ten (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 RERE-leases such AS A Hefty Spanish-language TOME EMOTIONally retitled "A BAD-Spanish Upanishad" by SrA. LOLA "LA LA" LAMAR, A

MALAdjusted typesetTER RETAliating for the misspelled title of Vol. 1, published in Madrid in MAY: "ANA Y AMar - I" ("Anna and LOVE"). (VOL. 2 was entitLED "EL SID - II".) DIVERS REVIewers raved. "ThIS SAGA'S A GAS!" SIGNALED "ADELANte" in the Costa BRAVO. OVAtions resoUNDED NUmerously. In the words of a critic who normally graded books from "F" to "A", SOL LEV: "RAMAYANA? A! NAY ... A MARVEL!"

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" lese majeste.

In equally dubious taste were the softcorn popcore French films, "Le RamassaGE D'ANNA," DEGradingly subtitled "From Forest Pick-up to Parlor Girl," and "ELLE, RAMA, L'AMARELLE," in which the couple wake up in a garden, EDen, taste RAMA'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 LEMon, the apple-cheeked, plumb-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 'n' ROLLORAMA," "ROLLORAMA," "ROLLORAMA III," 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 IndonesI-AN), 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 Nlghttime ways (and of RAMA'S SAMARITAN Attributes) was the televised docudrama, "ANNA'S ANNals - 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 tv station WOW FROM NOON MORE or lesS NONStop to four AM.

AS A MARkedly libelous version, "RamananDER 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 flim-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 ... Nlghtmarish 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 mores - how crASS! ... A MASS-media massacre that actually outDId Tokyo-KYOTO-TOYOTa Video-CASSETTES' 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, AmarCORD 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, GIgantc and greasy, who repairs FIATS' TAlIpipes in a pLAZZA In Rome, etc.

AS SACcharinely sung by the Ramapithecans, Edgar DIVIdES ANNA'S loyalties. RENDERED A DERelict and grieving, RAMA'S A MAR-Ginal man by the end of the disquE. ROMAN AMORE? - HAH! EROT-IC? - O, NO, NO! CITY of love - ROME? MEMORY? MY EYE! Yecch.

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-EVACu-ated, the prehysterical Ramapithecans have gone too far for ME. WERE WE Merely to show hIM DIS DISC, SID'S ID MIGHT, in fact, sink through his boots. OTTO'S TOO. And they would be far calm-er 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 his wife, HOWEVER. ANNA REVENged SID'S DISloyalty, even if Sid was royalty: thus, IN RE SITA'S, ANNA'S, 'AT IS, 'ER Nlbs' reaction to RAMA'S A-MARital ricochet romance with NAOMI - MOAN! - well ... that was a divorce of a-nother dullard.