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### SPEAK UP

## ŚRĪ RĀMA KATHĀ IN JAIN LITERATURE

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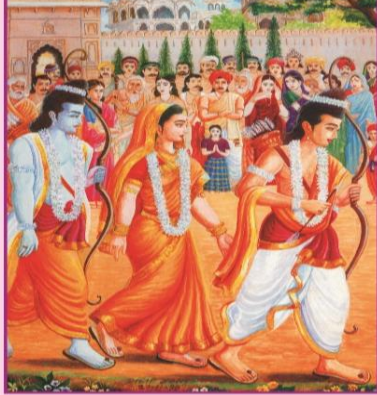
In the descendent line of Rishabhadeva in Iksavakuvansa, king Adityayasha started Suryavansa, whose great grandson was Dasharath. He married three queens named Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kekai.



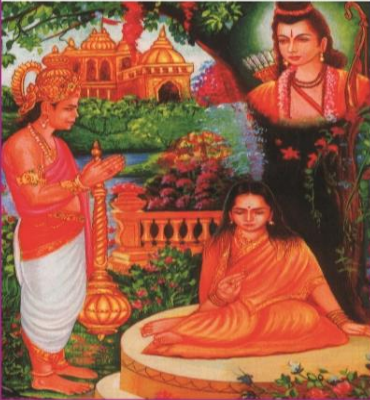
In the course of time Kaushalya delivered a boy named Ram. In his young age brave Ram very often fought with cruel people to save the innocent subject.



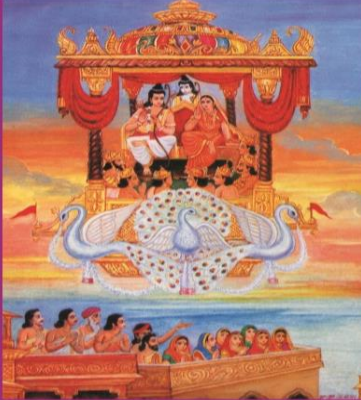
Ram along with his wife Sita and brother Laksman went to jungle for 14 years to keep the promise of his father to mother Kekai.



Ravana kidnaped Sita to Lanka and tried to lure her but couldn't succeed. Hanuman reached Ashokvatika and presented her Shri Ram's ring.



Ram won the battle against Ravana and returned to Ayodhya in Pushpak Viman. Many vidyadharas accompanied him.



Sita was sent to the jungle where she gave birth to twins. They recognised their father at the battlefield and returned to Ayodhya. Ram renounced the world after seeing the transient world.



This article wishes to show the various narratives on Śrī Rāma in Jain literature with special reference to *Paūmacariyaṃ* (1<sup>st</sup> CE) and *Vividha-tīrtha-kalpa* (14<sup>th</sup> CE). In *Paūmacariyaṃ* (*Padmacaritra* in Sanskrit), Rāma is narrated as Padma, a sign of perfect spiritual legend. On the other hand, *Vividha-tīrtha-kalpa* is a description of sacred *tīrthas* visited by Ācārya Jinaprabhasūri in 1329-1333 CE, though some of the *tīrthas* he couldn't visit but narrated as per the legends. He described Ayodhya in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter as 'Ayodhyā-nagarī Kalpa'.

For centuries, Śrī Rāma's stories have been very popular in every Indian house. The question arises that when practically almost every family in India is very much aware of the tales of *Rāmāyaṇa*, then why repeat the same story again and again in various forms like *Rāmalīlā*, *Rāmakathā*, etc.? The reason behind its repetition is that the listeners awaken their own spiritual culture and live happily in their lives. Additionally, the common people could learn more by seeing the trouble taken by their hero Rāma to obey his father's words as well as to fight for establishing peace and justice. People remember him as a great emperor and wish for a kingdom like his that was called *Rāma-rājya*.

In Jainism, too, *Rāmāyaṇa* is famous as in Vedic tradition. It was first told by Lord Mahāvīra to his chief disciple Indrabhūti Gautama who retold the same to his disciples and thus became known to generations of people. Later on, in the 1<sup>st</sup> CE, Vimalasūri framed the same in the form of epic in Prakrit and was called *Paūmacariyaṃ*. Afterward, *Rāmāyaṇa* was composed by many monk-scholars to emphasize the life of Śrī Rāma. There are seventeen stories of Rāma available in Jainism, some of the important work is listed here:

1. *Paūmacariyaṃ* by Vimalasūri (1<sup>st</sup> century CE)
2. *Vasudeva-hiṇḍī-* by Saṅghadāsa (before 6<sup>th</sup> CE)
3. *Padmapurāṇa* by Raviṣeṇa (678CE)
4. *Paūma-cariu* by Svayambhu (in MS form, before 8<sup>th</sup> CE)
5. *Caūpana-mahāpuruṣa-carita* by Śīlācārya (868CE)
6. *Uttarpurāṇa* of Guṇabhadra (9<sup>th</sup> CE?)
7. *Bṛahat-kathā-koṣa* of Hariṣeṇa (931 CE)
8. *Mahāpurāṇa* of Puṣpadanta (965 CE)
9. *Kahāvalī* of Bhadreśvara (11<sup>th</sup> CE)
10. *Yogaśāstra* and *Triṣaṣṭhi-puruṣa-caaritra* by Hemcandra (12<sup>th</sup> CE)

Besides Śrī Rāma's tales, plenty of tales of Sītā are also written by Jain monk-scholars. She has also been included in the devotional songs of sixteen honourable Jain women. Some scholars from southern India have written a list of thirty *Siyā Caritras* including the noteworthy work of Ācārya Pampa. Besides, *Triṣaṣṭhi-mahā-purāṇa* by Malliṣeṇa, *Mahāpuruṣa-caritra* by Merutuṅgasūri,



*Sapta-Mahākāvya* by Meghavijaya, *Dvisamsthāna-kāvya* by Dhanañjaya, *Triṣaṣṭhi-smṛti* by Paṇḍita Āśādhara, etc. are important works narrating the tales of Sītā.

The latest version of *Rāmāyaṇa* is in Gujarati and written by Ācārya Guṇaratnasūri who belongs to the Bhuvanabhānusūri's tradition.

The first epic on Śrī Rāma from a Jain perspective was by Vimalasūri called *Paiṇmacariyaṃ*. It narrates the long descriptions of towns, hills, mountains, and seasons. The epic beautifully recounts the sports in the sea as well as marriage ceremonies. He shows that *rākṣasas* were not man-eating demons but were *vidyādhara*s – a class of beings endowed with many supernatural qualities and were also highly civilized.

Rāma was the emperor of Ayodhya in the period of 20<sup>th</sup> Tīrthaṃkara Munisuvrata. Although there is much similarity in its narration with Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, it stands out due to some exceptions like Hanumāna and Rāvaṇa were humans, Hanumāna attained liberation, Rāvaṇa will also become a *tīrthaṃkara* in future, and many characters of the epic renounce the world. Also, Rāma belonged to the same dynasty, *ikṣvāku*, as the first *tīrthaṃkara* Ṛṣabhadeva.

The first valuable work on Jain Rāmāyaṇa *Paiṇmacariyaṃ* was first published in English in 1914 CE and was edited by Dr. Herman Jacobi. Its revised edition was edited and published in 1962 CE by Muni Puṇyavijaya with the help of other material that was not used by Dr. Jacobi.

Jinaprabhasūri, author of the *Vividha-tīrtha-kalpa* belonged to the *kharatara-gaccha* lineage. He has mentioned that Ayodhya was as big as 12x9 *yojana*. He composed many books furnished with historical accounts of important pilgrimage places. The *Vividha-tīrtha-kalpa* was composed in 1329-33 CE. It has 62 chapters and the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter mentions the beautiful details about the city of Ayodhya. It mentions several names of Ayodhya like Aujjhā, Avajjhā, Kosala, Vinitā, Sāketa, Ikṣvāku-bhūmi, Rāmapurī, etc. It mentions the vital importance of the city and states that it is protected by Yakṣī Cakreśvarī and Yakṣa Gomukha of Ratna Mandira.

We can say that the tales of Rāma, Sītā and Ayodhyā are prominent in Jainism and are told by many Jain monk-scholars.

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