

REFERENCES TO RĀMĀYAṆA
IN AN EARLY BRAJABHĀṢĀ HAGIOGRAPHY*
(Summary)

The poetic work *Bhaktamālā* (Bh.M.) composed in Early Brajabhāṣā by Nābhādās (fl. 1600), depicts a large number of Rāma-devotees who lived between the 12th and 16th centuries. In this context reference is often made to Rāma, Sītā and other main characters of the Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyaṇa*.

1. Rāma

1.1. His typical epithets. Reference to Rāma's lineage is obvious in such names as Raghuvīra, Raghunandana, Rāghava, Raghuvara, Raghunātha and Raghupati. He is further called "King of Kośala", "Sītā's husband", "the bowman" and "the lotus-eyed".

1.2. Devotees in the context of Rāma's epithets. The various characteristic names of Rāma are mainly linked with the history of the cult between the 12th and the 16th centuries. Among the devotees mentioned are: Khem Gusāi, Agradās, Naraharidās, Rāmānanda, Kalyān Singh, Mānadās, Jasodhar, Sotī, Vyās Svāmī, Śrīdhar, Murāridās, etc. (See also below, 3.1 and 3.2).

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2. Other main characters

2.1. Names and epithets. The introductory Bh. M. stanzas give homage to the eight counsellors of Daśaratha and to the eighteen allies of Rāma. Other characters mentioned include Daśaratha, Sītā and her father Janaka, Rāma's brother Lakṣmaṇa, Hanumān and the Sabarī woman.

2.2. Their links with the devotees. The epic characters are pictured in their relationship with various Rāmabhaktas such as Jasodhar, king Kulaśekhar, Khem Gusāi, Bāvan (i.e. Vāman), Kāmadhvaj, Padmanābh, etc. (See also below, 3.1 and 3.2).

3. Revival of the epic characters

3.1. Identification with the characters. Some devotees became so much enraptured that they identified themselves with one of the epic characters. The Bh. M. and its extensive commentary by Priyādās (dated 1712) describe several enraptured devotees, such as: king Kulaśekhar, a *bhakta* acting the part of Daśaratha, Jasodhar, Murāridās, etc.

3.2. Rāma's concern for the devotees. When his devotees are in moral or physical distress, Rāma comes to their rescue. Several divine interventions are recorded in the Bh.M. and in its commentary.