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Digital Retelling Of *Ramayana*: The Intersection Of Technology And Literature In Modern Storytelling

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Abstract

This paper examines how the Indian epic *Ramayana* is rewritten with the help of technology and writing in the digital medium. With the advancement of digital media, the ancient books like the *Ramayana* are converting into an engaging visual experience. Among other major digital versions of the story that are the focus of this study includes *Ramayana: The Epic (2010)*, an animated movie that was directed by Chetan Desai, and *Ramayana: Clash of Ram* - an interactive video game. This research looks at how these digital versions do transformation constructs, captivates everyone and affects how a person understands culture. By using a qualitative method within the ambit of Digital Humanities, it deals with how-the differences in structure, themes, and characterization between traditional manuscripts and their digital adaptations were studied.

Digital Humanities is a term for viewing how culture has been mediated and is creating the transformed tales. It examines how digital versions of canonical texts change the way they were previously perceived and dramatically reconceives their notion of authenticity and representation. The study also investigates how new technologies such as AI, VR, and AR disrupt the traditional storytelling form by making the experience much more immersive. However, these new technologies also ignite the issues of culture preservation or rather defining true stories. Digital Humanities, as such, explores how the *Ramayana* became digital. It investigates technology's interface with archaic writings and modern digital culture. It then ends by gauging the "good" and "bad" for digital storytelling and bystanders to ensure that epics like the *Ramayana* will still obtain importance as technology advances.

Keywords: *Ramayana*, Digital Retelling, Digital Humanities, Narrative Transformation, Digital Storytelling, Authenticity, Technological Adaptation, AI, VR, AR, Cultural Preservation, Modern Adaptations, Digital Media.

Introduction

Storytelling has always been an important part of human society, (Lambert,2013). It helps keep traditions alive, shares values, and brings people together. Storytelling has changed with the times, going from being told orally to being written down. It has also changed to fit the tools and technologies of the time. It is definitely changing in the digital age, which means there are new places and ways to try out different kinds of stories. The *Ramayana* is one of those stories that has been told for a very long time. It is an important part of Indian culture and has reached people all over the world, crossing over time and space. The sage Valmiki wrote *Ramayana*. Not just a story about evil and good, it is also a study on dharma, relationships, morals, and what it means to be human. Over hundreds of years, it has been told through varied forms as dance, music, theatre, and visual art. These adaptations are not mere retellings; they reinterpret and adapt concepts from the epic to the social, cultural and historical settings of their truths. *Ramayana* is now being narrated by modern means-digital web shows, video games, even graphic novels, and virtual reality. So, old stories are brought up to date with new technology, and new perspectives are found while the epics are brought closer to the people of the world. The digitization of stories makes it possible to understand traditional writings in a very different way. With technologies like

augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI), artists can make experiences that are so immersive that characters and events from the *Ramayana* can come to life in ways that were previously impossible, (Gardiner and Musto, 2015). When stories are told to an audience, they become more than just a passive viewer. In role-playing games based on the *Ramayana*, they can play as Rama or Hanuman and decide how the story goes next. This kind of innovation does more than just make stories more fun. It makes people even more committed to the epic's ideas and ideals.

However, when technology meets writing, it leads to a new question about what is real and how it is represented, as well as the differences between modern and traditional forms. On the other hand, these versions could change the original story, the politics of culture, and even the theory behind it. Globalization and commercialization make things even more difficult for artists, who have to find a balance between the needs of all the different groups and the integrity of the epic, (Said, 1978). This makes the study of digital versions of the *Ramayana* the most up-to-date and important.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In this paper, the text finds application in the form of a digital retelling of the *Ramayana* to examine the confluence of technology and writing. It intends to tell old books by trying two different parts of digital stories along the lines of new technology. While the *Ramayana* is, in and of itself, an important epic in Indian literary history, it has made a very long and colorful journey through translations by several languages and performances in theatre, cinema, and now new digital media.

The demonstration of new ways of thinking and connecting through such digital forms-as movies or games, and in some cases, even interactive media-brings to consideration the close scrutiny of case studies such as *Ramayana: The Epic*-the animated movie and *Ramayana: Clash of Ram*-the video game-that delve into the reinterpretation of foundational notions such as dharma, karma, and the hero's journey.

Non-linear narratives, interaction, and multimedia have been assessed in terms of their comparative effectiveness in digital as opposed to oral and written storytelling modes, as well as in terms of their impact on audiences, particularly younger-generation viewers, by comparison in terms of access, emotive response, and relevancy between the original writings and their digital counterparts.

It also discusses the new forms of problems that arise when the *Ramayana* becomes digitalized-associated with ethics, aesthetics, and technology-all in an attempt to weigh how well such transformations strike a balance between tradition and newness. It also explores how digital tools for the humanities- be it data visualization or interactive media- may assist in analysis and reinterpretation via art-form.

The complexity of such adaptation is explored in this paper on how storytelling shifts into the digital age, given recent advances in technology such as VR, AR, and AI. The discussion added by this will serve to augment the debates concerning the preservation and re-imagining of culture using the case study of the *Ramayana*. It will make for an ever-changing dimension of Digital Humanities that moves with contemporary technology and culture.

Research Methodology

In this study, the digital narration of *Ramayana* is interpreted through qualitative methods, which include textual analysis, case studies, and techniques of comparatives. It concerns the structure of the story, its themes, and characterization across some selected versions in the digital world.

Among the two main case studies: 2010 animated film *Ramayana: The Epic* by Chetan Desai and the video-game *Ramayana: Clash of Ram*. They are two kinds of digital media-film and games-which looks at them from a different perspective. Among other secondary sources, key texts would include *The Digital Humanities: A Primer* by Gardiner and Musto, *Digital Storytelling* by Joe Lambert, and *The New Digital Storytelling* by Bryan Alexander. Such studies also include academic research in digital storytelling and *Ramayana* adaptations. Surveys, community forums, and online reviews will be used to gather information about the reactions of people to understand different cultural engagements and a generation's inclination. This study also juxtaposes these digital versions with the original text to see how some major values such as dharma, karma, and family are either changed or preserved. Narrative theory and cultural studies are the bases for investigating different storytelling traditions concerning their impact on society and culture.

While highlighting two major digital versions, this study notes the presence of many other versions and presents the encouragement as well as disillusionment of digital stories. It discusses, finally, the problems in introducing

epic stories into digital forms and suggests areas for future studies in both immersive and culturally relevant storytelling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The tale of the *Ramayana* has ancient Indian origins, and it has been told innumerable times over centuries through means of oral traditions, written texts, plays, films, television, or, more recently, through digital media. The advent of newer technologies is now suitable for digitally storytelling with the *Ramayana* as its focus. This altered the mode of telling, the interactive nature of people's engagement, and the cultural transmission of the *Ramayana*. There has been a plethora of studies done regarding the digital retellings, and researchers have opined upon their implications for literature and technology and their reception by people.

Digital storytelling has greatly impacted the way stories are created, shared, and read. Lambert (2013) defines digital storytelling as a hybrid of conventional storytelling and multimedia tools that enhance immersion in the experience. The interactive, hypertextual, and multimedia dimensions, as described by Alexander (2011), also work in keeping digital narratives interesting. In that sense, themes and mythic aspects of the *Ramayana* themselves lend themselves to much more digitized access for modern readers. A nice case in that transformation would be *Ramayana: The Epic* (2010), which captivates the attention of contemporary audiences by way of digital animation. The film preserves the spirit of the epic but plays with some visual representation and storytelling elements to appeal to contemporary sensibilities. Coincidentally, the video game *Ramayana: Clash of Ram* is marrying granular game mechanics with the myth's telling for an interactive experience where players participate in the drama.

New forms of responding to literature have been brought forward by technologies. Gardiner and Musto (2015), for instance, presented instances of how the digital humanities keep classical works alive by giving them new meaning. AI, VR, and interactive platforms are some of the digital technologies that enhance narratives by giving the readers spatial, dynamic, and personalized experiences. Thus, when the *Ramayana* is translated in these modern ways, it becomes plastic enough to accept its upgrades based on modern technologies while retaining its core format as a story. Interactive settings such as mobile applications, web-based stories, etc., allow people to read the *Ramayana* out of order. Users could view the epic from various perspectives and engage with people differently along different storylines. This correlates with Ryan's (2004) theory of narratology that states, through the creative inheritance of digital media, any story can have multiple readings and thus has the tendency to be fluid and participative.

The *Ramayana*'s digital avatar seriously impacts culture and even education. Scholars say that it is very important because such digital manifestations are integral to preserving culture by keeping traditional narratives alive and meaningful to the younger generation. Digital storytelling, as one form of "cultural" teaching, makes it easy for students to follow and much more interesting to study. The *Ramayana* is presented all over the world through animated and engaging games and augmented reality experiences. This gives another culture understanding of other cultures in such a way. Digital retellings will add to the currently ongoing conversation on who wrote it and how authentic it is. It will definitely make one ponder whose right it is to know it and how much it may get changed before the stories are told to be exclusive to any particular format. However, stories that take form and change across multiple platforms have, according to Henry Jenkins, only amplified the strength of cultural stories rather than detracted from them in his study on transmedia storytelling 2006. Digital retellings of the *Ramayana* which employ this transmedia method will reach even larger audiences while still adapting to the new ways of telling stories.

Digital retellings are very good; however, they also pose certain challenges. The translation of sacred texts into digital interpretation raises ethical issues concerning the notions of accuracy, truthfulness, and profit-making. There is a division among scholars on whether these digital adaptations preserve the original text or commoditize the culture for entertainment purposes. In addition, problems of convenience such as inability to use technology and lack of technology disadvantages people from being included in these stories. Yet despite the existing circumstances, digital retellings of *Ramayana* offer a glimpse of the transformations that literature and traditional age-old stories are undergoing with time. Such works will show how digital media can connect the past and the future by showing how culture and technology can go together.

One of the large transformations in the surviving memory and experience of ancient stories is the digital memory of the *Ramayana*. Digital storytelling techniques are employed by filmmakers, game developers, and digital humanists to constantly augment the tradition of this epic. There are still debates with regards to its "real" and "moral", but technology enhances storytelling in ensuring that these stories still bark today. It will be interesting

to see how artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and blockchain technology will be used to push the boundaries of digital books in the future.

Unveiling the Digital Evolution of the *Ramayana*

The *Ramayana* is one of the most significant epics in India, and it has undergone changes many times over the ages—from told orally and written down till it's performed on stage and printed, (Thapar, 2000). And now, the digital age has brought forth new writing forms beyond the boundary of what has been done before. The present technologies employ digital forms of the *Ramayana* using video games, animation, and the storytelling power of transmedia to help make the tale more relatable to today's audience and even more interesting. Such adaptations do keep the major line and allow for new ideas to come through those, which fit into present-day tastes. Digital tools are becoming more and more utilized by people, changing the way they consume epics, from consumption to production. Such adaptations offer experiences that are immersive, visual, dynamic, and interactive, making the audience more attached to the story than traditional forms, such as recitations, stage performances, or script reading.

In fact, the advent of animation has succeeded very well to carry the *Ramayana* to the youngest through dramatized visually enticing stories. The newer techniques in animation, such as CGI and motion capture, are used in such films to bring alive the centuries-old tale with their mythological environments and character designs. Such cinematic techniques recreate the old into new narrative forms, making them relative in modern times with the media society. In the same way, video games now allow an interaction part to the Epic, where players can take on avatars of famous characters of the game, like Rama, Hanuman, and Ravana, and view the action firsthand. While action and strategy fighting with mission-based gameplay and realistic world-building make it all the more enthralling for the audience, these games turn the *Ramayana* into a thrilling, action-packed tale.

Transnational transmedia storytelling has reached the *Ramayana*, spreading it even further—on the web show, social media, mobile apps, and interactive websites. It has a different flavor from adaptations that can cover just a single media. Therefore, transmedia storytelling makes it possible for an audience to partake from different angles across a myriad of entangled forms, rendering the storytelling experience complete and more immersive. The most popular series that give *Ramayana* a touch is *Legend of Hanuman*. It shows the way people crave this form of consumption in the series—their appetite for complex characters and massive epic worlds. Digital comics and graphic novels have also redefined the *Ramayana* in pictorial formats that integrate traditional art with elements of modern storytelling. And with that has surfaced a hitherto uninvited audience for epics, one that is possibly inclined towards visual rather than textual tales.

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) have been made to enhance engagement in the storytelling of some adaptations of the *Ramayana*. Jean Baudrillard, in *Simulacra and Simulation*, warns of hyperreality, where representations replace reality itself. (Baudrillard, 1994) "In the age of digital reproduction, the distinction between the original and the copy collapses, creating a world of signs detached from their referents."

Applying Baudrillard's critique, Vijay Sharma argues, "Digital adaptations of *Ramayana* often exist in a liminal space where reality and fiction blur, leading audiences to engage with a simulacrum rather than the authentic epic. (Sharma, 2018)" This suggests that digital retellings create an illusion of authenticity while fundamentally altering the narrative's core values. Such technologies allow the users to experience significant sections of the epic within a virtual environment. This makes the tales much more interesting than usual. For instance, the VR recreation of Ayodhya and Lanka allows one to tour these mythical places in a first-person perspective, thus personalizing and interacting with the story much better. While AR apps integrate the digital content into the physical world, allowing the users to catch cartoon broadcasts of *Ramayana* on their phones. These technologies would thus ensure that this epic story remains a living and changing story, rather than a static work of writing found only in old books.

Such digital retellings have a lot going for them, but they too hold the potential to generate a few quandaries and moral dilemmas. The issue of authenticity and understanding of other cultures is one such concern. The *Ramayana* interprets differently in its many regions and traditions. Digital adaptations of the epic should necessarily tread that line of being artistic but not capturing the essence of the story itself. The digital adaptations put entertainment value over cultural purity, and hence this reflection makes people think that the video game and other forms of entertainment commercialized mythology. Indeed, these stories have to be universalized and rethought continuously to keep them current; however, changes must not violate any moral and philosophical

tenets of the original text. This understanding is crucial, going forward, to future digital retellings, which would remain true to the original yet appealing to the modern by such changes.

The *Ramayana* in digital media presents an amalgamation between technology and tradition to ensure that the epic will resonate with audiences in an ever-changing media environment. New modes of *Ramayana*, such as animation, video games, transmedia storytelling, and the experience by immersive technologies, have redefined how the text is read, experienced, and interpreted. These changes do much beyond giving the epic to the new generation; they will equally allow for different readings in form with the ongoing way cultural narratives evolve. However, as digital storytelling continues to improve, striking the delicate balance between adaptation and preservation remains imperative to ensure the essence of *Ramayana* stays the same while maximizing the benefit of all digitization media.

Digital Transformations of the *Ramayana*

The *Ramayana* was a broad concept, quite distant from the digital age. The art of storytelling has reinterpreted and reimaged the epic to suit modern viewers. Digital-mediated storytelling comes in various forms, including cartoons, games, transmedia narratives, digital comics, and virtual and augmented experiences that put you right in there. These digital altercations respect the epic's cultural and moral tenets, while at the same time often appealing to a technophile audience. Roland Barthes, in *Mythologies*, argues that modern media transforms myths into consumable popular culture, altering their ideological significance, (Barthes, 1972). According to Barthes, "Myth is depoliticized speech; it transforms history into nature." This perspective is crucial when analyzing *Ramayana* in the digital era, as adaptations often reshape the epic's core themes to align with contemporary sensibilities.

Arshia Sattar, a prominent scholar of *Ramayana*, critiques modern adaptations, stating, "The digital medium allows for reinvention, but at the cost of selective narration, often omitting parts that challenge dominant socio-political discourses. (Arshia, 1990)" This selective representation can lead to oversimplification, reducing *Ramayana*'s complexity to fit modern consumption patterns. Digital storytelling can make their own decisions unlike their oral or written counterparts because of interactivity and visual immersion. They allow human engagement with the form here into a new territory. In doing so, the *Ramayana* transcended its birthplace and culture to embrace approaches of high-definition animation, interactive gameplay, and virtual storytelling. Such opportunities will take the story to newer generations and put forward creative reinterpretations and reinventions of how it can be told, thus keeping its currency today.

Animated Adaptations and Visual Storytelling

Animation has played a significant role in contemporary zing *Ramayana* for digital viewers. Animated films have changed the way the epic is viewed using more contemporary art forms of visual storytelling to attract audience attention. *Ramayana: The Epic* (2010) stands out as one of the paramount animation adaptations of the epic. With the use of high-end CGI and motion capture, it brought the tale to life. Another noteworthy adaptation is *Sampoorna Ramayana* (2016), wherein bright animation aims to attract children while remaining faithful to the story. The films echo the main ideas and morals of the original story but tell them through modern animation. With moving pictures, expressions of characters, and gripping stories, the *Ramayana* becomes more comprehensible, especially for children who may find the classic text version less gripping. Besides, animation creates a window through which the *Ramayana* is introduced to the very wide audience across the world, thereby establishing a bridge between the lands through the universality of the appeal of the stories. The vibrancy and accessibility of the animated versions tell us how digital media can help keep lives of an epic alive for more glare.

Interactive Gaming and Mythological Engagement

The gamification of mythology is a new way of telling the story, and interactive ones have done a good job of incorporating the *Ramayana* into this mode. Games like *Ramayana: Clash of Ram* let players embody prominent characters from the *Ramayana* narrative-Rama, Hanuman, and Ravana-to engage in strategic battles, while other missions are based on the storyline. Besides, mobile games like *Hanuman: Boy Warrior* take a more action-oriented perspective, putting players in substantial battles and divine quests. This mode essentially turns the audience from passive spectators to active players, involving them much deeper in the mythology than traditional modes of storytelling do. By providing players choices in guiding their characters, the video games offer multiple branching storylines for exploring various aspects of the *Ramayana* and options that change how the respective story unfolds. With beautiful graphics, realistic designs, and engaging gameplay, these games revolutionize the

Heroes of *Ramayana* with narration, entertaining and educating players about the in-depth and complex themes present within the epic, thus aligning moral and cultural values. The presence of mythology in video game formats stands as testimony to how well the old tales fit into modern digital entertainment.

Transmedia Narratives and Multi-Platform Storytelling

Transmedia storytelling has modified readers and viewers of the *Ramayana* regarding the story's plot over digital channels. However, transmedia storytelling narrates the epic through an array of interconnected formats, which may include web series, mobile apps, social media contents, and interactive experiences. This approach, therefore, gives people diverse experiences of the story while allowing them to engage through different aspects of the *Ramayana* on the digital platforms of their viewing preference. One such transmedia adaptation is the web series *Legend of Hanuman* on Disney+ Hotstar. It reimagines the tale through high-quality 3D animation and episodic shorts. *Siya Ke Ram* (2015), a TV show that later got digital streaming shares the other side to Sita's story. Then social media outlets stood to really work the *Ramayana*. Alongside Facebook and Twitter, digital creators have put together short video formats, animated explainers, and interactive discussions drawing the tale to new audiences. Mobile application offerings enhance reading through quizzes and the game-like retelling of legends, so that more people can be enriched. Through digital platforms, transmedia storytelling enables the *Ramayana* to hold on as a living, ever-changing story that continues to entice a modern audience.

Graphic Novels and Digital Comics

Digital comics or graphic novels have another great way to tell the *Ramayana* in a visual manner. This sort of retelling is characterized by old myths brought to life with new art forms so that present-day children and people around the world can relate to them. The *Ramayana* 3392 AD graphic novel series is an excellent example of this retelling. It places the epic in a dystopian future. This adaptation juxtaposes sci-fi and mythological themes to create an engaging, innovative platform for present-day readers. Another example would be the digital publication of *Ramayana* by Amar Chitra Katha, which retains traditional storytelling elements spiced with orientation and engagement features, such as voice narration and animated panels. Online comics have also begun serializing the *Ramayana* to allow fans to follow the story chapter by chapter. From the outset, these digital comics/graphic novels remain read visually interesting and the spirit of the epic continues to carry on. Digital comics and graphic novels ensure that the *Ramayana* will be forever retold in popular culture, melding mythology with modern forms of storytelling.

Immersive Experiences with Virtual and Augmented Reality

People have changed in their connectivity with this ancient epic with their reimagining of retelling digitally the *Ramayana* through virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), animation, video games, and transmedia storytelling. New-age adaptations do help students as well as folk interested in mythology to see this story in an engaging way and improve their interest while giving them a unique pedagogical experience.

Users of *Ramayana* VR can view an entire 360-degree virtual environment, interact with the characters, and experience events such as Rama's exile, Sita's abduction, and Ravana's battle. Augmented reality applications similarly mix tradition and innovation by superimposing digital effects upon real-world photographs to recreate the grand glory of events. Such technological additions to the *Ramayana* make the epic more accessible and attractive to the younger generations as the same is changing from passive viewing to interactive encounters.

The *Ramayana*, for example, has evolved over time, from the oral tradition to written texts, performances, and printed editions. Storytelling exceeds the conventional in the age of digitization and, thus, utilizes popular media like video games and animation to reach an audience that would otherwise be indifferent to the ancient art. While retaining the core themes, digital adaptations introduce new, interactive features aligning with the 21st-century paradigm of preferences. In this way, video games allow players to play the role of Rama, Hanuman, or Ravana and experience the epic.

Digital adaptation of the *Ramayana* varies from generation to generation and culture to culture, consistent with Hans Robert Jauss's Reception Theory, which says that a text's meaning is defined by the expectations of an audience, (Jauss, 1982). As for research on the *Ramayana*, John D. Smith posits that digital versions of the *Ramayana* need to balance authenticity with audience appeal for modern consumers, (Smith, 1988). However, the rapid advances in the aspects of digital media are mechanism for a rather skewed representation, one that is more reflective of current social and political situations than of the epic as intently perceived.

Animation, more than any other path to adaptation, creates the most accurate reflection of myth in movement capture and computer-generated imagery. These films keep most of the *Ramayana* intact narrativity-wise, while aesthetically bringing the fantasy closer to the eyes of a younger audience. In this same way, digital comics and graphic novels bring in newer audiences, much like their traditional peers drawn to illustrated stories rather than the words, by marrying the classic in storytelling with modern visual techniques.

Transmedia storytelling creates an epic across different channels, such as an interactive website, social media, web series, and mobile apps. Within this structure, one can experience all aspects of the *Ramayana* in many ways, thus providing truly comprehensive and immersive experience to the viewers. The popularity of web dramas like *The Legend of Hanuman* shows how popular serialized adaptations with complex characters and vast epic settings are becoming.

By constructing experiences that allow people to experience Ayodhya, Lanka, and other legendary places up close, VR and AR technologies enhance immersion. By immersing spectators in the *Ramayana*'s world, these virtual landscapes enhance the immersive and participatory experience. By fusing digital and real-world aspects, augmented reality apps improve narrative while preserving the epic and advancing with technology.

Digital retellings create questions about cultural representation and authenticity notwithstanding these advancements. Because the *Ramayana* is understood differently in different places, adaptations must strike a balance between artistic freedom and faithfulness to the epic's essential principles. Furthermore, there are moral concerns about putting enjoyment above cultural integrity when mythology is commercialized through video games and other entertainment mediums. The *Ramayana* remains relevant despite modernization, but it is important that adaptations preserve the original text's ethical and philosophical principles.

The *Ramayana*'s digital metamorphosis is an amazing blend of technology and culture that guarantees its survival in a changing media environment. The epic continues to enthrall audiences of all ages by utilizing immersive technologies, transmedia storytelling, animation, and video games. But as digital storytelling develops, finding a balance between preservation and adaptation is still crucial. The objective is to preserve the *Ramayana*'s core while enhancing its narrative for upcoming generations by utilizing contemporary digital technologies.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations in Digital Retellings

By virtue of the digital medium, traditional knowledge and modern technology meet in a fascinating manner that gives this epic relevance to modern-day viewers. But that very transformation raises its own set of problems and moral questions that must be dealt with so as to safeguard cultural purity, authenticity, and respect for the spiritual and historical essence of the epic.

One of the basic problems digital representations of the *Ramayana* face is to be true to the stories while adding interest for the current audiences. Walter Benjamin, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, argues that "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. (Benjamin, 2008)" This perspective is highly relevant to digital retellings of *Ramayana*, which often dilute the original oral and textual traditions.

Critic Meenakshi Mukherjee supports this view, stating, "Digital retellings, while engaging, strip epics of their socio-religious gravitas, turning them into commercialized entertainment devoid of their historical essence. (Mukherjee, 2000)" The concern is that digital versions reduce complex philosophical and ethical dilemmas to mere spectacle, prioritizing accessibility over depth.

Many forms of the *Ramayana* exist around the world, namely, Valmiki's *Ramayana*, Kamban's Tamil *Ramayana*, Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*, and versions further afield from Southeast Asia. Most digital retellings treat only one source, or artistically transpose the story in ways that run the risk of leaving out important cultural or philosophical details, at times almost by accident.

For example, digital adaptations sometimes oversimplify dharma and karma to fit them into prevailing entertainment forms. Thus, the deeper moral-spiritual concepts of the epic are overshadowed. A significant question here would be to prevent the digital *Ramayana* from being simple in terms of philosophical depth and dignifying the various ways which people have interpreted the *Ramayana*.

The commercialization of the television serials, video-games, and animated films often knowingly takes precedence over literal accuracy. Edward Said's *Orientalism* critiques how cultural narratives are reshaped by dominant ideologies, (Said, 1978). Applying his framework, critics argue that digital retellings of *Ramayana* sometimes reflect Western media influences, distorting indigenous narratives.

Rajeev Saran, an expert on digital literature, notes, "Many digital retellings of *Ramayana* cater to global audiences, thereby diluting its deeply rooted Indic ethos. The need for global accessibility sometimes leads to distortion rather than interpretation.

(Saran, 2019)" This raises ethical concerns about cultural representation and authenticity in digital storytelling. While these versions may create an entry-point for the populace at large into the *Ramayana*, they ironically trivialize its philosophical content into sheer entertainment.

For instance, in extreme action video games like *Ramayana: Clash of Ram*, the action-oriented focus might actually dilute the philosophy of allegiance, dharma, and righteousness intrinsic to the epic. Likewise, animated adaptations crudely adapt dialogue or excise relevant material to tighten the presentation - necessarily introducing an element of simplification to the plot. Thus, to hold together the spirit of *Ramayana*, a harmony must be negotiated between artistic manipulation and reluctance toward source material.

Misrepresentation presents a grave problem, for that is what the digital can ill-afford - the scope, penetration, and outreach compete with print. Some retellings could be seen as making use of Western narrative structures or otherwise bending the motivations and justifications of characters in the epic so as to be embraced worldwide. While these changes may aid the popular acceptance of the *Ramayana*, they would also be altering religious convictions and cultural beliefs, creating a real potential for conflict.

Transformations-where female-led retellings foreground Sita, as in *Siya Ke Ram*, for positive and negative critiques-given the scope for presenting to both the critic and reader new perspectives that may dilute the religious standing of the original. Feminist theorists like Simone de Beauvoir emphasize that reinterpretations of classical texts often reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," she writes, emphasizing the constructed nature of gender roles.

Paula Richman, a scholar on *Ramayana*, notes, "Most digital adaptations continue to portray Sita as the passive, suffering wife, failing to engage with the alternative feminist readings that exist in regional and folk traditions.(Richman, 1991)" This raises concerns about whether digital platforms reinforce patriarchal narratives rather than offering a progressive reinterpretation. Likewise, elevating Ravana to misunderstood heroism or other abnormal human character traits can have varying opinions questioning whether these changes honor or disturb the epic's memory.

This poses an ethical conundrum: should sacred ones be immersed in interactivity? Although video games based on the *Ramayana* engage the epic in various ways, it raises some doubts regarding the moral and spiritual lessons of this epic setting in jeopardy.

For instance, allowing players to choose decisions that contradict the storyline, such as letting Ravana win or otherwise changing the antithesis of the battle, could be expected to confuse newcomers, i.e. the unprepared audience, unfamiliar with the traditional wisdom of the epic. Also, monetizing these celestial beings in terms of in-app purchases and advertisements could come across as offensive.

The *Ramayana* has been passed down from the scriptures, oral tradition, and temple performance. In spite of its novelty and appeal, the digital adaptation may overshadow more traditional forms of the narrative. Many older people and scholars have expressed that animated films and games are no match for the spiritual and immersive experience of a live Ramlila performance.

Yet, the technology keeps the *Ramayana* alive for the generations to come. Through AR and VR, this kind of interaction would enhance the appeal by providing a real feel of exploring Ayodhya or Lanka. The real concern is that this kind of addition should not displace the old methods of storytelling, but rather work alongside them.

Conclusion

Now, the digital retelling of the *Ramayana* is a tremendous stride by ancient epics in staying alive, understood, and enjoyed. The *Ramayana* itself has transcended orality and book reading; it has now been animated, flown into video games, trans mediated, and made into interactive technologies such as AR and VR. These bring stories to the worldwide populace and redefine how they understand mythology in the present times. Digital storytelling breathes and has added a new dimension to the life of the *Ramayana* with greater engagement and eye-appeal. It is especially appealing to the younger crowd who may not connect or feel part of those traditional text-based or face-to-face storytelling methods.

Critical questions now rise with regards to authenticity, cultural representation, and sharing true tales, not to mention change. Adapting the tale for modern audiences while maintaining its philosophical and moral depth is among the most difficult things to accomplish. Not a story alone, the *Ramayana* is a work of high philosophy that has thousands of years of influence in moral and ethical debate. Digital avatars that place action or entertainment

or making money ahead of meaning in cultural and spiritual terms do lose track of what the epic is all about. Fighting video games and animated films that simplify complex stories for easy understanding can distort the deeper meanings embedded within the original stories.

There is also quite a huge argument regarding national authenticity. Different versions of the *Ramayana* have been written by different countries and have different perspectives. A lot of times, digital retellings adopt only one perspective or wrongly, twist important events and characters, so as to make the story less specific or more marketable. Although reinterpretation is normal during the evolution of literature, digital adaptations of epics should bear the fact that their interpretation carries a responsibility borne by the true elucidation of philosophical and cultural aspects of the story. The adaptations or versions inspired by commercial structures of storytelling may unintentionally misrepresent the emotional and thematic essence of the epic and thus alter the very perception people have about it.

Another equally significant issue is that of commercialization. Transforming sacred tales into commodities, indeed, brings some doubts about whether or not it is morally right to have the *Ramayana* profited from by mobile games. With the interactive story forms that allow changes in crucial events—for example, multiple endings or actions by characters—the very structure of morality that governs the *Ramayana* will be violated resulting into divergent interpretations. Stories must not only be allowed to be creative but need to be enacted in a manner that will uphold the cultural and historical integrity of the epic.

In the near future, digital tools like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Extended Reality (XR), and Blockchain will pave new ways to narrate the *Ramayana* digitally. Artificial intelligence will personalize experiences through storytelling, while virtual and augmented reality will place end-users inside mythical worlds in which they can live the epic. More so, the technology of Blockchain will help preserve the original forms of the *Ramayana* and ensure that the digital adaptations are true to the original texts with the possibility of making their versions.

Making a digital version of the *Ramayana* is an important step toward learning the ancients with today's modern technology. Exciting avenues have now opened for engagement and accessibility; a careful balance needs to be found between new and old, new ideas and old ones. Digital storytelling, however, will keep the *Ramayana* alive into the coming generations only with appropriate safeguards against cultural, moral, and philosophical compromising of the epic itself. In the digital age, digital adaptations of the *Ramayana* can be a strong way to breathe life into the past and yet update it, merging new technologies with age-old traditions.

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