A Storytelling Performance Based On Valmiki’s Ramayana
Jointly organized by Asia Research Institute, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Religion Cluster and the South Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore

Date : Wednesday, 30 January 2013
Time : 16:00 - 18:00
Venue : Faculty Lounge @ The Deck, Level 2
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
National University of Singapore (Kent Ridge Campus)

The Ramayana and the Mahabharatha are the two great epics of Indian civilisation. The Ramayana is the older of the two and is regarded as the adi kavya or first work of poetry. Its legendary composer Valmiki is regarded as the adi kavi or first poet. The performance today is based on excerpts from the Sanskrit original and will be presented in two sessions.

The Ramayana consists of seven kandas (books). The opening session is based on balakanda (book of childhood), the first four sargas (chapters) of which describe the circumstances that lead to the poet’s creation of the sloka (verse) form, and how he is thereby inspired to write the epic using the sloka form. This story is outlined with the help of the original verses from the first four chapters.

The second session is based on Book Five, Sundarakanda (‘book beautiful’) of the Ramayana. Valmiki’s poetic powers reach their zenith in Sundarakanda, which includes the adventures of the popular monkey Hanuman in his search for Sita who has been abducted by the powerful demon king Ravana. The aim of this session is to share a sample of Valmiki’s poetry with the audience, with selected verses sung in Sanskrit and interpreted in English. The selected verses depict Ravana’s profession of his love for Sita, and Hanuman’s presentation of the signet ring to Sita as a token that he is Rama’s messenger come in search of her.

This performance is held in conjunction with the ARI workshop on “Replaying the Past: Performances of Hindu Textual Heritage in India and Bali” happening on 31 January 2013 to 1 February 2013 at the ARI seminar room, Tower Block level 10, 469A Bukit Timah Road.

Ananth Rao is an academic mathematician by profession. Katha kalakshepa, or storytelling, has been a major interest for many years. He performs in English to multilingual audiences in Australia, and in India both in English and in Kannada. The stories are drawn from the epic and classical literatures of India and make extensive use of original Sanskrit and vernacular texts. He is currently a visiting fellow in the South Asia program, School of Culture, History and Language at the Australian National University, Canberra.

REGISTRATION

Admission is free. We would greatly appreciate if you RSVP to Mr Suen Johan at Email: johan@nus.edu.sg