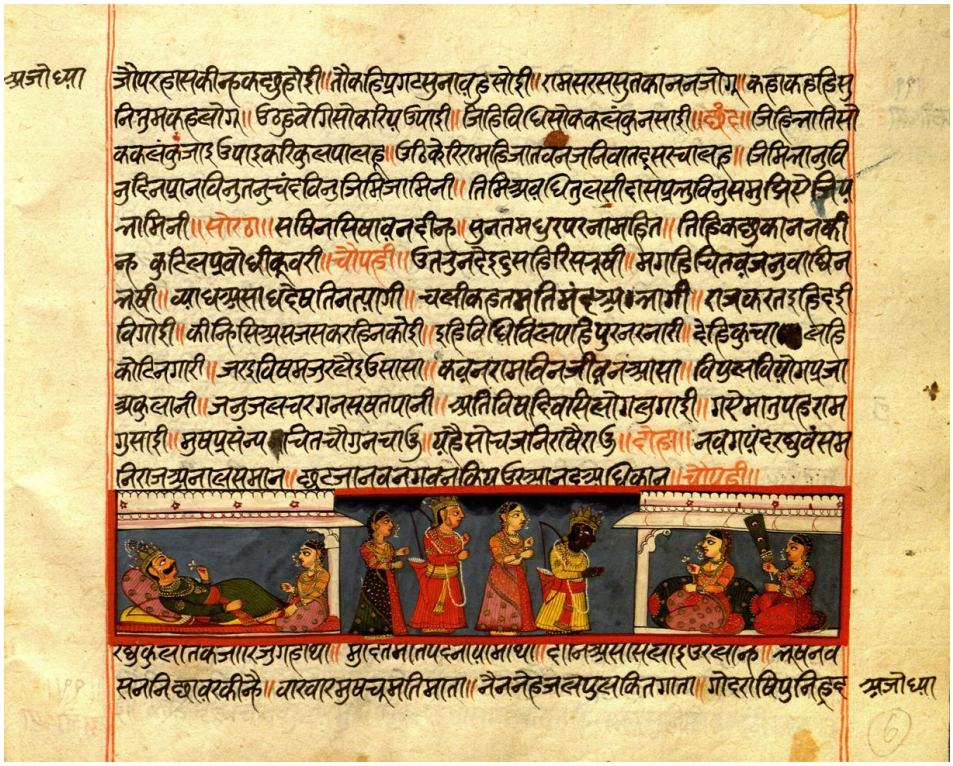
इन्दिरा गान्धी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र

Ministry of Culture
Government of India
सत्यमेव जयते

National Museum-
New Delhi

The Illustrated Manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa of Tulasīdāsa



A PROPOSAL FOR

NOMINATION FOR UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL REGISTER FOR CYCLE 2023-24

1 Title of Documentary Heritage Item or Collection (max 10 words)

The Illustrated Manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa of Tulasīdāsa

2 Summary (max 200 words)

The Rāmacaritamānasa, composed by the renowned poet-saint Goswami Tulsīdāsa, is a poetic retelling of the ancient Sanskrit epic Ramayana. Deeply rooted in the bhakti (devotional) tradition, the Rāmacaritamānasa has been widely regarded as a seminal work of spirituality and moral idealism in India and the surrounding region.

Tulsīdāsa's work played a crucial role in legitimizing and disseminating the Ramayana narrative through the medium of manuscripts, which were diligently copied and preserved by various Sanskrit scholars, royalty, and devoted followers of Lord Rama over the centuries. The poet himself provides the date of composition, stating that he completed the Rāmacaritamānasa in 1574 CE during the Navaratri festival in Ayodhya.

At the core of the Rāmacaritamānasa is the narrative of Lord Rama, the seventh avatar of the divine preserver, Vishnu. According to Tulsīdāsa, the story was originally narrated by Lord Shiva to his consort, Parvati, before being passed down to the poet through his spiritual mentor, Naharidas. The Rāmacaritamānasa is widely known as "Tulsikrit Rāmacaritamānasa," highlighting the poet's seminal contribution to this enduring literary and spiritual legacy.

The nominated illustrated manuscripts of the Rāmacaritamānasa are truly exceptional, containing over 200 exquisitely detailed miniature paintings, making them unique and rare treasures.

3 Nominator/s Contact details

3.1 Name of nominator/s (person/s or organisation/s)

National Museum, New Delhi, Ministry of Culture, Government of India

3.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Owner of the documentary heritage

3.3 Contact person/s

Director General
National Museum, New Delhi
Ministry of Culture, Government of India

3.4 Contact details

Name	Address
Dr. B. R. Mani	National Museum Janpath, New Delhi 110 011
Telephone +91 (0) 11-23018159, +91 (0) 11-23018046	Email dg.nmnd@gov.in

4. Declaration of Authority

I certify that I have the authority to nominate the documentary heritage described in this document to the Asia Pacific Regional Memory of the World Register.

Name	Position
Dr. B.R. Mani	Director General
Address National Museum Janpath, New Delhi 110 011	**Email** dg.nmnd@gov.in

Signature/s of nominator/s

5 Legal Information

5.1 Owner/s of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different from the nominator/s)

The Director General
The National Museum, New Delhi-110001
Email: dg.nmnd@gov.in
Phone: +91 11 23018159, 23018046
Website: https://nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/en

5.2 Custodian/s of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner/s)

Same as the owners indicated above

5.3 Legal status

(a) These manuscripts are owned by the above-mentioned public and private institutions across India. India's legal framework for preserving documentary heritage includes the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, and the Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878 (No. VI). The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act empowers the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to safeguard archaeological sites and monuments. Additionally, the National Archives Act, 1990, establishes the National Archives of India for the preservation of historical documents. The Copyright Act, 1957, governs the reproduction of copyrighted works, including manuscripts. These laws provide the foundation for heritage protection.

(b) The Ministry of Culture oversees initiatives with the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) operating under the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). IGNCA is dedicated to preserving India's cultural traditions, including manuscripts, and NMM plays a vital role in comprehensive documentation and dissemination. Funding supports world-class preservation and conservation practices, enabling academic access while preserving cultural significance with strict permissions and approvals in place.

(c) The National Museum housing these manuscripts adhere to strict standards and regulations for their preservation. The physical access to the manuscripts even for academic and research purposes, is granted only after due permission from the Director General of National Museum. The Central Industrial Security Force personnel oversee the security of the museum premises. Protocols govern the movement and handling of manuscripts, with authorized officials being the only individuals allowed to do so.

5.4 Accessibility

i. Physical Access: The physical access to the manuscripts even for academic and research purposes, is granted only after due permission from the Director General of National Museum.

ii. Digital Access: The digital access can be provided at IGNCA New Delhi which is the digital repository of these manuscripts but only after due permission from both the Director General of National Museum and the Head of the Kalanidhi Division of IGNCA. Digital access can also gained by approaching the National Museum directly with the permission of Director General of National Museum as they also have the digital copy of the manuscripts stored offline.

5.5 Copyright status

All the manuscripts provided are covered under the provisions of copyright as applicable.

6 Details of the Nominated Documentary Heritage

6.1 Exact title of the documentary heritage

The Illustrated Manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa of Tulasīdāsa

6.2 Type of documentary heritage

Paper Manuscripts.

6.3 Catalogue or registration details

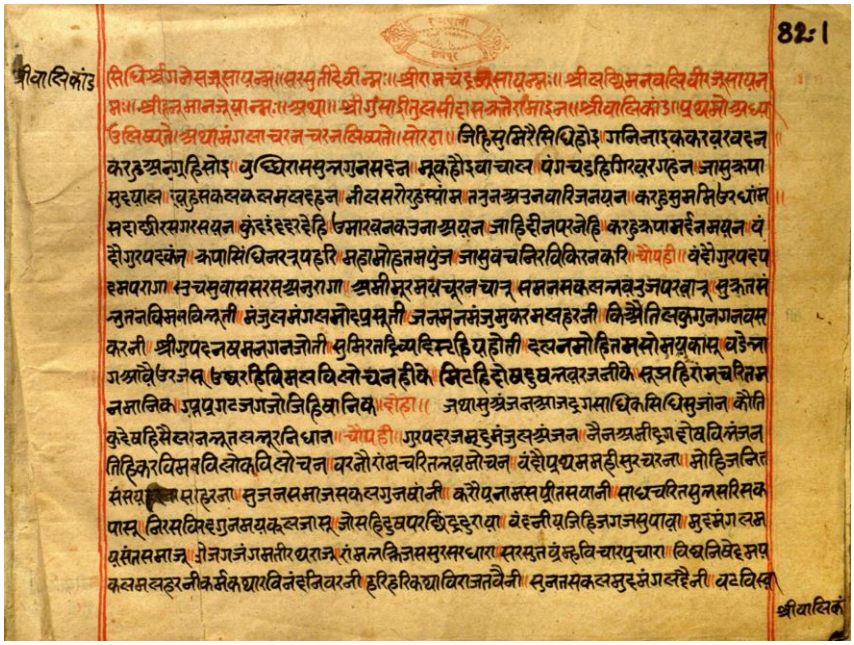
1. Accession No. : 82.1
Rāmacaritamānasa
National Museum, New Delhi
Script: Devanāgarī
Language: Avadhī
Pages: 237
Material: Paper
Completeness: Complete
Date: 1920
Illustrated

2. Accession Number: 86.154/1
Rāmacaritamānasa with illustrated paintings
National Museum, New Delhi
Paper
Complete
Avadhī
Nastaliq
1900 circa
Illustrated

3. Accession Number: 86.154/2
Rāmacaritamānasa with illustrated paintings
National Museum, New Delhi
Paper
Complete
Avadhī
Nastaliq
1900 circa
Illustrated

Note: It's important to note that the manuscripts labeled as Accession Number: 86.154/1 and Accession Number: 86.154/2 constitute parts 1 and 2 of a single original manuscript. When combined, they contain all the chapters of Tulasīdāsa's Rāmacaritamānasa. The division into two parts is solely due to the binding.

6.4 Images of the documentary heritage.

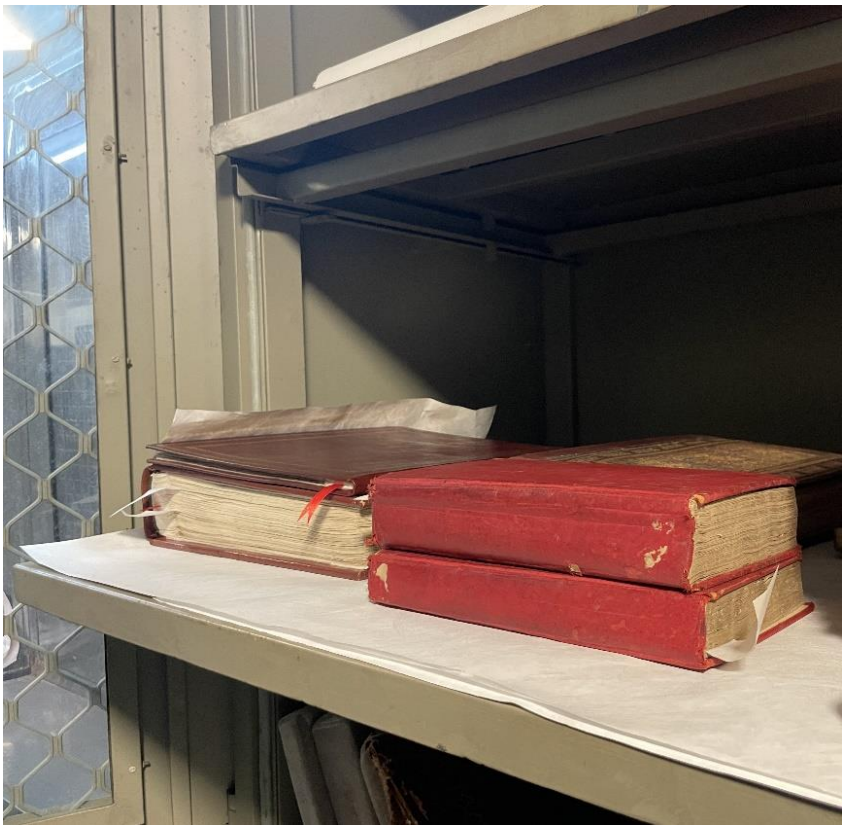


Rāmacaritamānasa (Accession No. : 82.1) , National Museum, New Delhi

Rāmacaritamānasa (Accession No. : 82.1) , National Museum, New Delhi

Rāmacaritamānasa (Accession Number: 86.154/1) ,National Museum, New Delhi.

Rāmacaritamānasa with illustrated paintings (Accession Number: 86.154/1), National Museum, New Delhi.



The manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa in the storage area of National Museum, New Delhi

The physical copy of the Rāmacaritamānasa (Accession Number: 86.154/1) placed on a Japanese tissue paper at National Museum, New Delhi

6.5 History/ Origin/ Background/ Provenance

Background

Rāmacaritamānasa*, or the '****Lake of the deeds of Rama****,'* is an epic poem composed by the revered-poet saint ***Goswami Tulsīdāsa***. It is a poetic storytelling of the ancient Sanskrit epic ***Ramayana,*** which was originally authored by the sage ***Valmiki***. The ***Rāmacaritamānasa*** is deeply rooted in the bhakti (devotional) tradition and has been widely regarded as a seminal work of spirituality and moral idealism in India and the surrounding region.

Though the Ramayana existed previously in the form of an established oral tradition, Tulsidas' ***Rāmacaritamānasa*** played a crucial role in legitimizing and disseminating the narrative through the medium of manuscripts. These manuscripts were diligently copied and preserved by various Sanskrit scholars, royalty, and devoted followers of Lord Rama over the centuries.

Tulsīdāsa himself provides the date of composition in the text, stating that he completed the ***Rāmacaritamānasa*** in Samvat 1631 (1574 CE), during the auspicious Navaratri festival in the month of Madhu (spring) in the holy city of Ayodhya.

At the core of the ***Rāmacaritamānasa*** is the narrative of lord Rama, the seventh avatar of the divine preserver, ***Vishnu***. According to ***Tulsīdāsa,*** the story was originally narrated by Lord ***Shiva*** to his consort, ***Parvati***, before being passed down to the poet through his spiritual mentor, Naharidas.

The ***Rāmacaritamānasa*** is widely known as ***Tulsikrit Rāmacaritamānasa***, or the '***Rāmacaritamānasa*** composed by Tulsidas", highlighting the poet's seminal contribution to this enduring literary and spiritual legacy.

Provenance

As soon as the Rāmacaritamānasa was written by Tulasīdāsa it gained immense popularity among the people from various backgrounds and regions of the Indian subcontinent. The process of making multiple copies of the manuscript in different scripts was initiated because of the demand for the manuscript copies at the time. In the 18th-19th century, the princely states of the country sent their Pundits to Kāśī to copy the Rāmcaritamānasa and bring it to their places. Hence along with Devanāgarī script, a number of manuscripts are also available in Gurmukhī and in Persian script.

The manuscript with Accession No. 82.1 was purchased from Chattarpur Palace, Khajurao, Madhya Pradesh by the Art Purchase Committee of The National Museum in 1982. The colophon tells us it was commissioned by Maharajadhiraja Jagatraj Mahipal and scribed by Shivaram Upadhyay in Rajnagar, Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh.

The manuscripts with Accession No. 86.154/1 and 86.154/2 were purchased from Jaipur, Rajasthan, by the Art Purchase Committee of The National Museum in 1986. Since the colophon is missing not much is known about the manuscripts journey.

These manuscripts held a sacred position and were carefully handed over from generation to generation. In the 18th and 19th centuries many oriental research institutions and libraries were established all over the subcontinent by the princely states and governments of the times to preserve the invaluable and immense heritage of the subcontinent.

6.6 Bibliography

A. Works by Foreign scholars

- The Rāmāyaṇa of Tulasīdāsa, F. S. Growse (Trans. R. C. Prasad), Moti Lal Banarsi Das, Delhi, 1978
- The Ramayan of Tulsi Das or the Bible of Northern India, Macfie, J.M., Edinburgh: T. & T. CLARK, 38 George Street, 1930
- Early Modern India: Literatures and Images, Texts and Languages, Maya Burger, Nadia Cattoni (Eds.): The Metrical Style of Tulasīdāsa, Hiroko Nagasaki, CrossAsia-eBooks, Heidelberg University Library, 2019.
- Śrīrāmacaritamānasa, (tra.) Jin Ding-han , The Department of Oriental Studies in Beijing University, China
- Rāmakathā-Utpatti Aur Vikāsa, Father Camille Bucke's, Hindi Parishad, Allahabad University,1962
- Rāmacaritamānasa in South Africa, Ushadevi Shukla, Moti Lal Banarasi Das, Delhi, 2002

6.7 Names, qualifications and contact details of experts

[redacted]	Member, ICHR Former Chairperson National Monuments Authority	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted] National Council of Educational Research and Training	[redacted]
[redacted]	Professor, JNU	[redacted] Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi [redacted]

I certify that the above named experts have given their written permission for their names and contact details to be used in connection with this nomination to the Memory of the World Asia Pacific Regional Register.

Dr. B.R. Mani

Date: 09-04-2024

7 Authenticity and Integrity

7.1 Authenticity and Integrity

The authenticity and integrity of the nominated illustrated manuscripts of the Rāmacaritamānasa have been thoroughly verified. The National Museum in New Delhi first acquired these manuscripts in 1982 (Accession No. 82.1) and 1986 (Accession Nos. 86.154/1 and 86.154/2) respectively.

During the acquisition process, the art purchase committee of the National Museum carefully examined the manuscripts and ensured their authenticity in accordance with the government norms and the institutions' standards. The committee verified the provenance, materials, calligraphy, and illustrations to ascertain the manuscripts' originality.

Furthermore, the text and illustrations within the manuscripts themselves reiterate their authenticity. The colophon of the Devanagari manuscript (Accession No. 82.1) clearly states the name of the scribe and the order of the patron, while the Nastaliq manuscripts (Accession Nos. 86.154/1 and 86.154/2) exhibit the distinctive stylistic features of the Awadh school of miniature painting. There are no indications of the manuscripts being altered or damaged. The documentary heritage presented is intact and faithful to its original form.

8 Primary criteria: Regional Significance

8.1 Historical Significance

About the text Rāmacaritamānasa

The Rāmacaritamānasa is also known as *Tulsīkritarāmāyaṇa, Tulasīrāmāyaṇa*, *Tulasīdāsarāmāyaṇa* or simply *Mānasa*. It is composed of nearly 1073 verses, comprising seven chapters namely *Bālakāṇḍa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa, Araṇyakāṇḍa, Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa, Sundarakāṇḍa, Laṅkākāṇḍa* and *Uttarakāṇaḍa*. The standard verse is composed of four *caupāīs* (four-quatrain caupāī of sixteen moras) plus one *dohā* (couplet of twenty-four moras each concludes the stanza) or *soraṭhā* (a verse of forty-eight *mātras*). Hiroko Nagasaki in his research paper titled *'The Metrical Style of Tulasīdāsa'* gives details of different meters used in the text.

Most of the manuscripts start with seven *ślokas* (verses) as *maṅgalācaraṇa (*salutation) in Sanskrit -

varṇānāmarthasaṃghānāṃ rasānāṃ chandasāmapi /
maṅgalānāṃ ca karttārau vande vāṇīvināyakau //1 //
bhavānīśaṅkarau vande śraddhāviśvāsarūpiṇau /
yābhyāṃ vinā na paśyanti siddhāḥ svāntaḥsthamīśvaram //2 //
vande bodhamayaṃ nityaṃ guruṃ śaṅkararūpiṇam /
yamāśrito hi vakro'pi candraḥ sarvatra vandyate //3 //
sītārāmaguṇagrāmapuṇyāraṇyavihāriṇau /
vande viśuddhavijñānau kavīśvarakapīśvarau //4 //
udbhavasthitisaṃhārakāriṇīṃ kleśahāriṇīm /
sarvaśreyaskarīṃ sītāṃ nato'haṃ rāmavallabhām //5 //
yanmāyāvaśavartiviśvamakhilaṃ brahmādidevāsurāḥ
yatsattvādamṛṣaiva bhāti sakalaṃ rajjau yathāherbhramaḥ /
yatpādaplavamekameva hi bhavāmbhodhestitīrṣāvatāṃ
vande'haṃ tamaśeṣakāraṇaparaṃ rāmākhyamīśaṃ harim //6 //
nānāpurāṇanigamāgamasammataṃ yad
rāmāyaṇe nigaditaṃ kvacidanyato'pi /
svāntaḥsukhāya tulasī raghunāthagāthā-
bhāṣānibandhamatimaṃjulamātanoti //7 //

In these manuscripts, each Kāṇda also follows with the salutation in Sanskrit.

While some manuscripts directly starts with *soraṭhā.*-

jo sumirata sidhi hoi gana nāyaka karibara badana /
karau anugraha soi buddhi rāsi subha guna sadana //1 //

Rāmacaritamānasa has elements from many other Rāmāyaṇa written earlier in Sanskrit, and other Indian dialects as well as stories from Purāṇas. Like a great *Saṅgrahagrantha* (Compilation) it also assimilates the traditions of Nigama, Āgama, and Major Purāṇas. It follows parallel verse from Bhagavadgitā-

jaba jaba hoī dharama kai hānī / bāḍhahiṃ asura adhama abhimānī //
karahiṃ anīti jāi nahiṃ baranī / sīdahiṃ bipra dhenu sura dharanī //
taba taba prabhu dhari bibidha sarīrā / harahiṃ kṛpānidhi sajjana pīrā //
asura māri thāpahiṃ suranha rākhahiṃ nija śruti setu /
jaga bistārahiṃ bisada jasa rāma janma kara hetu // (Bālakāṇḍa- 120, 3/4)

*(**Meaning**: Whenever virtue declines and the vile and haughty demons multiply and work iniquity that cannot be told, and whenever Brāhmaṇas, cows, gods, and earth itself are in trouble, the gracious Lord assumes various (tran- scendent) forms and relieves the distress of the virtuous.)*

The conception of Rāmacaritamānasa

The author himself calls the epic as the story of Rāma that was stored in the mind (Mānasa) of Śiva before he narrated the same to his wife Devī Pārvatī. He ends every chapter in a similar manner describing the ending in the Sanskrit language.

"iti Śrīmad rāmacaritamānase sakalakalikaluśavidhvamsane… sopānah samāptah"
*(**Meaning**: Thus ends the … descent into the Mānasa lake of Śrīrāma's exploits, that eradicates all the impurities of the kali age.")*

About the author Tulasīdāsa

Tulasīdāsa an outstanding Indian Bhakti poet, and social reformer who lived in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. He was born in 1532 CE in Soron village of Uttar Pradesh, India. He composed around 12 granthas, works in Avadhī language– *Rāmacaritamānasa*, *Rāmalāla-nahachhu*, *Barvai-rāmayaṇa*, *Pārvatīmaṅgala*, *Jānakīmaṅgala* and *Rāmājñāpraśna*; works in Braja language – *Kṛṣṇagītāvali*, *Sāhityaratna*, *Dohāvalī*, *Vairagyasandīpanī, Vinayapatrika* and *Kavitāvali.* Dr. Allchin has translated *Kavitāvali* as part of the Indian series of the translations collection of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, jointly sponsored by UNESCO and the Sahitya Akademi (National Academy of Letters of India.

Tulasīdāsa's meeting with his guru Naraharidāsa proved to be a turning point in his life. Disregarding complex rituals he became the crusader of the Bhakti movement in Northern India by inspiring intense devotion towards Lord Rāma. Tulasī says-

soi jasa gāi bhagata bhava tarahīṃ / kṛpāsindhu jana hita tanu dharahīṃ //
rāma janama ke hetu anekā / parama bicitra eka teṃ ekā // (Bālakāṇḍa-121, 1)

*(**Meaning**: Singing the glory (of Rāma) the devotees cross the ocean of mundane existence; it is for the sake of His devotees that the compassionate Lord assumes a body.)*

About the Manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa

With the help of the invention of printing technology, many editions of Rāmcaritamānasa have been published. Even before this, manuscripts have played an important role in satisfying the spiritual thirst of the Indian masses. Due to the widespread influence, the general public's desire to obtain various facets of Rāmakathā and oral transmission, etc. many manuscripts of Rāmcaritamānasa are found across the country. An attempt has also been made to make a critical edition of Rāmcaritamānasa on the basis of these available manuscripts. Because manuscripts help in maintaining the originality of the text.

Scholars like Mātāprasāda Gupta, have mentioned several manuscripts and research papers on Rāmcaritamānasa and Tulasīdāsa. Bhāratī Bhaṅḍāra Edition by Vijayānanda Tripāṭhī (Samvat 1826), Bhāgavatadāsa Khatrī edition from Kāśī (Samvat 1842), Indian Press Edition (Samvat 1959), Critical edition of Ayodhyākāṇḍa (Samvat 1965) by Lāla Sītārāma, Tulasīgranthāvalī edition (Samvat 1980) by Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, 'Kalyāṇa-Mānasāṅka' Edition of Gita Press Gorakhpur by Nandadulāre Vājapeyī (Samvat 1995), etc. are the notable editions of the Rāmcaritamānasa. Scholars like Udayaśaṃkara Dube and Vijaya Nātha Miśra worked on different manuscripts of the text. Researchers from various universities, religious institutions, and individuals worked on Rāmacaritamānasa and Tulasīdāsa.

Mātāprasad Gupta gives details of some important manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa-

- A manuscript of Chakkanalāla dated Samvat 1616
- A manuscript of Raghunāthadāsa dated Samvat 1626
- A manuscript of Bandana Pāṭhaka dated Samvat 1646
- A manuscript of Bhārata Kalā Bhavana, Kāśī dated Samvat 1721

- A manuscript of Śaṃbhunārāyaṇa Caube Collection of Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā Kāśī dated Samvat 1762,
- Two manuscript of Kailāśanātha from Mirjāpura, Kotavālī Road, dated Samvat 1878 and 1881
- A manuscript of Kodavarāma which is used by Śrī Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Bombay dated Samvat 1653 to 1665 etc.,

Rāmacaritamānasa in Relation to the Asia Pacific Region as whole and Its Sub-regions

The historical significance of Rāmacaritamānasa and Tulasīdāsa is multifaceted and deeply rooted in the culture, it remains a source of inspiration, devotion and cultural identity of the Asia-Pacific Region. Rāmacaritamānasa in Avadhī not only appeals to all those people whose language comes under the umbrella of Hindi, but also to speakers of other languages of Indian subcontinent including Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The Rāmacaritamānasa and Tulasīdāsa have become household words amongst Hindi-speaking Indians throughout the world. The entire civilized world has shown that Indians have carried with them their religion, culture and traditions wherever they have settled. Former plantation colonies like Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritius, Suriname and South Africa etc. are influenced by Rāmacaritamānasa. Usha Devi Shukla mentions its influence in South Africa as-

> *"Three hundred years following its composition, the Rāmacaritamānasa was carried to all parts of the world by labourers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. From 1860 to 1911, many thousands of these labourers arrived in South Africa with their copies of the Ramacaritamānasa as their pillar of Faith."*

The text has been translated into most of the South Asian Languages. The popularity of Rāmacaritamānasa is not limited to Hindus, people of all religions and races read and praise it greatly. Respected and renowned scholars, both eastern and western have researched, translated and commented on the text. Even translations of Tulasīdāsa's version of Rāmakathā have emerged in countries whose cultures are as old as that of India. E.g. Jin Ding Han's version of Rāmacaritamānasa in Chinese completed in 1988.

In 2005, UNESCO declared the tradition of *Ramalīlā* as among the 'Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'. Apart from being an important cultural activity in various cities in India, *Ramalīlā* has its importance in various South East Asian countries and is also a cultural celebration in many parts of the world. According to tradition, Megha Bhagat, a student of Tulasīdāsa started *Ramalīlā* which is mostly influenced by the Mānasa. Also *Ramalīlā* performed in Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean countries where the story is based on Tulasīdasa's Rāmacaritamānasa shows its wider influence in these countries.

8.2 Form and Style Significance

The illustrated manuscript in Devanagari script (Accession No. 82.1) is truly exceptional. It's adorned with stunning miniatures in the Awadh School style, making it a standout example. The first page proudly bears the seal of its patron, and throughout, it's marked by clean red borders and impeccable calligraphy in black and red. The colophon tells us it was commissioned by Maharajadhiraja Jagatraj Mahipal and scribed by Shivaram Upadhyay in Rajnagar, Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh. Each chapter's completion year indicates it took at least three years to create.

Similarly, the illustrated manuscripts in Nastaliq script (Accession Nos. 86.154/1 and 86.154/2) are remarkable. They feature exquisite miniature paintings, particularly showcasing the artist's skill in depicting scenes from the Ramacharitamanasa with vibrant colors like orange, yellow, light green, white, and pink. The ornate frontispiece and margins adorned with floral motifs, along with the geometric patterns on the folios, add to their beauty. While lacking a specific colophon, their calligraphy and illustrations are distinctly of the Awadh School style. Notably, important inscriptions are in red, while the text is in black, with decorative margins in gold, red, and blue. Handmade paper used for this manuscript was coated with egg and starch paste in order to give strength to calligraphy and illustrations.

These manuscripts housed in the National Museum are treasures, offering deep insights into the popularity and enduring influence of the epic poem, as well as India's rich artistic and manuscript traditions. They provide a glimpse into linguistic variations, dialects, and literary styles across North India over time. Each manuscript reflects local linguistic and artistic traditions, showcasing the skill of scribes and artists across different eras and regions. Additionally, they offer glimpses into the socio-cultural context of their time through dedicatory inscriptions, ownership marks, and marginal notes, shedding light on their patrons, scribes, and readers.

In sum, these manuscripts stand as prime examples of beauty and craftsmanship, each with its own unique features and styles. They enrich our understanding of India's cultural diversity and artistic heritage, showcasing intricate designs and motifs that make this collection truly extraordinary.

8.3 Social Community or Spiritual Significance

Social and Cultural Impact of Rāmacaritamānasa

Rāmacaritamānasa (The Holy lake of Rama's Act) is an independent work in itself in terms of literary, spiritual and artistic excellence even after following Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. The Rāmacaritamānasa reflects Tulasīdāsas' unwavering devotion to Lord Rāma and his deep understanding of human emotions, the eternal struggle between Dharma and Adharma. Tulasī compares good and bad by showing swan and says-

jaḍa cetana guna doṣamaya bisva kīnha karatāra ।
santa haṃsa guna gahahiṃ paya parihari bāri bikāra ॥

*(**Meaning**: God has created the universe consisting of animate and inanimate beings as partaking of both good and evil; swans in the form of saints imbibe the milk of goodness rejecting water in the form of evil.)*

Spiritual Significance of Rāmacaritamānasa

The text soon gained immense popularity among people from different backgrounds. Its poetic presentation not only made the epic accessible to the masses, but also served as a guide for moral conduct and spiritual awakening, hence the text popularly known as Tulasīrāmāyaṇa.

The tradition of oral recitation of *Mānasa* was very popular from its inception till the present day, in small villages and also in the metro-political cities. This is a continuation of the public recitation of Bhakti texts since the time of the Purāṇas in ancient India. The public recitations and the participation of all, regardless of caste, class, gender and sects connects the devotees to one another on the one hand, and ethical and spiritual values on the other hand. It also connects the devotees with all other beings, nature and God. J.M. Macfie says of the Rāmacaritamānasa-

> *"Few books are more widely known or have exercised a greater influence. We might speak of it with truth as the Bible of Northern India. A copy of it is to be found in almost every village. And the man who owns it earns the gratitude of his illiterate neighbors when he consents to read aloud from its pages."*
> *(Macfie 1930, The Ramayan of Tulsidas or the Bible of Northern India)*

Although it is in the form of narrative, it is a symbolic expression of timeless theological truths. It is also the representation of the 'cultural destiny' of the people, i.e. historical expression of self-consciousness. Growse says-

> *"It (Rāmacaritamānasa) is acknowledged not merely as the greatest modern Indian epic, but as something like a living sum of Indian Culture"*
>
> *(F. S. Growse 1978, Rāmāyaṇa of Tulasidāsa: Introduction by R. C. Prasad)*

Culture is not the object of self-consciousness; it is a mode of self-consciousness which is realized by the recitations of Rāmacaritamānasa. It is an apt example of spiritual humanism in India. Thus *Rāmacaritamānasa* continues to provide guidance, solace and inspiration to the world.

9 Regional Significance: Comparative criteria

The manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa are comparable to the manuscripts of Rāmāyaṇa. Rāmacaritamānasa and Rāmāyaṇa are two significant literary works in Indian culture that share common themes but differ in several key aspects.

They are similar in the following aspects:

Both texts center on the life and adventures of Rāma, highlighting his virtuous character and his role as a divine figure. Key characters like Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Hanumān, and Rāvaṇa are present in both texts. While their fundamental roles remain consistent, the characterization may vary slightly between the two works.

Both Rāmāyaṇa and Rāmacaritamānasa convey profound spiritual and moral teachings. They emphasize concepts such as *Dharma* (righteousness), *Karma* (cause and effect), *Mokṣa* (liberation), *Bhakti* (devotion), and the path to *Ātmajñāna* (self-realization). Both texts have left an indelible mark on Indian culture and society. They continue to influence art, literature, religion, and ethics, shaping the cultural identity of India.

Both these texts transcended the boundaries of India and spread their cultural, social and spiritual influence in the Asia Pacific region.

They differ in the following aspects:

Rāmāyaṇa was composed by the sage Vālmīki in Sanskrit, while Rāmacaritamānasa was written by Tulsīdāsa in *Avadhī*, a dialect of Hindi. This difference in language and authorship contributes to variations in style and tone.

Rāmāyaṇa primarily serves as an epic poem recounting Rama's life in a formal and narrative style. In contrast, Rāmacaritamānasa emphasizes Rama's divine nature and role as an *avatāra* of Lord Viṣṇu, adopting a more devotional and colloquial tone.

The influence of Rāmāyaṇa is evident in India, Nepal, Myanmar, Srilanka, Bhutan, China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, Mauritius Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and many other African and Asian countries. While the influence of Rāmacaritamānasa is evident in Nepal, Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and many other African and Asian countries.

9.1 Uniqueness or Rarity

The illustrated manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa nominated here are unique and rare. They are handwritten on paper in scripts that are now obsolete, making them some of the few surviving illustrated documentary heritage of the Rāmacaritamānasa found across the world.

The manuscripts in total contain more than 200 exquisitely detailed miniature paintings, which is highly unusual for manuscripts of this text. Generally, finding such illustrated manuscripts of the Rāmacaritamānasa in libraries, museums, and archives is exceptionally rare. The quality of the calligraphy is of the highest standard, suggesting they were scribed by master calligraphers.

The sheer number of illustrations also indicates that these manuscripts were produced for important patrons. The combination of extensive illustration, superior calligraphy, and the fact that they are written in now-rare scripts makes these manuscripts truly unique examples of their kind. There are very few, if any, comparable illustrated manuscripts of the Rāmacaritamānasa that can match the scale, artistry, and historical significance of the nominated items.

10 Gender

Tulasīdāsa's Rāmacaritamānasa is a literary masterpiece that addresses two significant aspects: the characterization of women and the promotion of gender equality in the context of spiritual enlightenment.

Characterization of Women and Its Importance:

Tulasīdāsa's portrayal of women in the Rāmacaritamānasa is deeply respectful and reverential. He sees women as not just humans but as the nurturers and preservers of the sublime qualities that form the foundation of humanity. He recognizes women as the source of divine qualities such as kindness, compassion, generosity, and many other virtues. In Tulasīdāsa's view, women embody these qualities effortlessly, making them integral to the fabric of society. He holds the maternal power in high regard, considering it the very source of the emergence of the divine spirit in tangible form.

This characterization of women as bearers of divine qualities and the pivot of the family and society underscores the importance of acknowledging and respecting their true nature, place, and responsibilities. Tulasīdāsa's portrayal of women as embodiments of virtuous qualities encourages a greater appreciation for their roles and contributions within families and society.

Gender Equality in Spiritual Enlightenment:

Tulasīdāsa's Rāmacaritamānasa advocates a vision of spiritual inclusivity and gender-neutral access to divine grace. His writings emphasize that the path to spiritual enlightenment is open to all individuals, irrespective of their gender or gender identity. He does not discriminate when it comes to devotion to God and highlights the universality of this path.

Tulasīdāsa explicitly states that men, women, and transgender, all individuals should approach God with sincerity, honesty, and without deceit. His teachings stress that the divine does not favor one gender over another. This message of spiritual equality is evident in verses like-

puruṣa napuṃsaka nāri vā jīva carācara koi /

sarba bhāva bhaja kapaṭa taji mohi parama priya soi," (7.87)

which underscores that devotion to God, practiced sincerely, is beloved by the Divine, regardless of one's gender.

Another verse,

rāma bhagati rata nara aru nārī, sakala parama gati ke adhikārī (1.7.21),"

reinforces the idea that men and women have an equal entitlement to spiritual enlightenment and the ultimate salvation, or moksha.

In conclusion, Tulasīdāsa's Rāmacaritamānasa beautifully characterizes women as bearers of divine virtues and underscores their crucial roles in society. Moreover, the epic promotes the concept of gender equality in spiritual enlightenment, stressing that devotion and access to the divine are open to everyone without discrimination based on gender or gender identity. Tulasīdāsa's work serves as a timeless reminder of the importance of gender equality in both the moral and spiritual realms.

11 Statement of Significance

Rāmacaritamānasa, authored by the 16th-century Indian saint-poet Tulasīdāsa, holds profound significance in various dimensions—historical, regional, social, spiritual, and in terms of its form and style. Its impact transcends boundaries, both in the Asia Pacific region and globally. It emerged during a period of immense cultural exchange and synthesis. It reflects the religious fervor of the Bhakti movement. In the Asia Pacific region, its significance also lies in its contribution to the understanding of Hinduism's diffusion to various countries.

The work is composed in *Avadhī*, a dialect of Hindi, making it accessible to a wide audience in North India. It played a pivotal role in the development of Hindi literature. Rāmacaritamānasa transcends the boundaries of caste and class, promoting the ideals of *Dharma* (duty and righteousness). It advocates equality, devotion, and the importance of leading a virtuous life. This made it accessible and relatable to people from diverse social backgrounds, fostering unity and a sense of moral duty. In the Asia Pacific region, it contributed to the spiritual and moral fabric of societies, guiding ethical conduct and religious devotion. At its core, Rāmacaritamānasa is a spiritual and devotional text. It extols the virtues of Rāma as the embodiment of the ideal human being and emphasizes the path of *bhakti* (devotion) as a means to attain spiritual liberation. The text's spiritual teachings have had a profound and lasting impact on the spiritual practices of millions of devotees. It has been translated into many languages like Nepalese, Bengali, Chinese, Urdu, English and in almost all Indian languages. The text is revered by Hindus and is recited and sung in temples and homes across India. It has influenced the Sufi Saints, Sikh community including the Gurus and *Guru-Grantha-Sāhib*.

It has inspired many works of art, music, and literature, and has helped to shape the values and beliefs of millions of people. The text is also credited with helping to spread story of Rāmma to other parts of the world, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and many other African and Asian countries.

Its rhythmic and melodious verses, along with the use of *dohas* (couplets), enhance its aesthetic appeal. The work's poetic style and literary excellence have earned it recognition as a masterpiece of Indian literature. Its literary and poetic qualities continued to captivate readers and listeners in the Asia Pacific region, contributing to their own literary heritage. In 2005, UNESCO declared the tradition of *Ramalīlā*, a theatrical performance based on the Rāmacaritamānasa, as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. This recognition is a testament to the cultural significance of the text and its continued relevance in the world today.

The illustrated manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa are a valuable resource for scholars and historians. They can provide insights into the poem's popularity and influence, shed light on the artistic traditions of India and pictorial style of the region of their time. The manuscripts are also a source of enjoyment for anyone who appreciates beautiful art and literature.

These manuscripts have played an important role to fulfill the spiritual thirst of the Indian masses and helped to maintain the originality of the text. In essence, the Rāmacaritamānasa and collection of its manuscripts attest to India's cultural richness and worldwide impact. There is a renewed interest in Rāmacaritamānasa in modern times, both in India and the rest of the world, something that attests its continuing value as a source of inspiration for humanity.

12 Risk Assessment

12.1 Condition

Accession Number: 82.1

Overall Condition: The overall condition of the manuscript is assessed as good.

Physical Description:

- Form: Bound manuscript.
- Stain Marks: Few stain marks are observed on several pages throughout the manuscript.
- Foxing Marks: Few foxing marks are present, affecting the appearance of some pages.
- Ink Stains: Ink stains occurred during the scribing and making of the manuscript, with some spread observed on certain pages.
- Paper: Handmade paper in stable condition, with acidity within the ideal range.
- Illustrations: Illustrations are stable and intact.
- Insect Infestation: No evidence of insect infestation or damage observed.

Detailed Observations:

- Stain Marks and Foxing: Limited instances of stain and foxing marks are noted, primarily affecting the aesthetics of select pages.
- Ink Stains: Ink stains resulting from the scribing process are present, with some instances of spread observed, potentially impacting text legibility in localized areas.
- Paper Stability: The handmade paper exhibits stability, with optimal acidity levels conducive to long-term preservation.
- Illustrations: Illustrations remain stable without signs of damage or deterioration.
- Overall Condition: Despite minor imperfections, the manuscript maintains its structural integrity.

Accession Number: 86.154/1

Overall Condition: The overall condition of the manuscript is assessed as good, despite slight damage to the outer edge.

Physical Description:

- Form: Bound manuscript with a hardbound cover.
- Damage: Slight loss observed on the outer edge, attributed to past pest damage predating acquisition by the National Museum.
- Darkening: Some folios exhibit darkening in localized areas due to aging.
- Folio Strength: Fair strength observed across folios.

Detailed Observations:

- Outer Edge Damage: Slight loss on the outer edge indicates past pest damage, which occurred before the manuscript's acquisition by the National Museum.
- Darkening: Darkening of folios in select areas is noted, likely due to aging and environmental factors.
- Binding: The hardbound binding remains in good condition, ensuring the manuscript's structural integrity.

Accession Number: 86.154/2

Overall Condition: The overall condition of the manuscript is assessed as good, with minor issues noted regarding loose folios.

Physical Description:

- Form: Bound manuscript with a hardbound cover.
- Loose Folios: Two loose folios observed within the manuscript.
- Darkening: Some folios exhibit darkening in localized areas due to aging.
- Folio Strength: Fair strength observed across folios.

Detailed Observations:

- Loose Folios: Two folios are observed to be loose within the manuscript, requiring attention to prevent further damage or loss.
- Darkening: Similar to accession number 86.154/1, some folios show darkening attributed to aging and environmental factors.

Recommendations:

- Secure loose folios

12.2 Threat/Risk

No Threats/Risks.

The above manuscripts housed at the National Museum enjoy a secure and stable environment, free from significant threats to its preservation. Situated on the first floor of the museum atop Raisina Hill, the storage area remains immune to flood risks. Robust storage practices, including controlled climate regulation through air conditioners and dehumidifiers, mitigate environmental hazards such as mold growth and physical degradation. Additionally, stringent access protocols and security measures, including regular housekeeping and oversight by the Central Industrial Security Force with armed personnel, safeguard against unauthorized handling or theft. The building, enclosed by fencing and under CCTV surveillance, further fortifies security measures. Its sound structural integrity, complemented by proper earthing and fire extinguisher measures, provides additional reassurance against potential risks. Continuous monitoring ensures optimal conditions, with artificial lighting maintained within ideal ranges. Collectively, these efforts ensure the manuscript's safety and long-term preservation within the museum's collections.

13 Preservation and Access Management Plan

The National Museum, funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Government of India, prioritizes heritage preservation through systematic mechanisms. Equipped with a state-of-the-art conservation laboratory, staffed by trained professionals, including conservators and chemists, the museum ensures advanced preservation techniques. Funding allocations support conservation, preservation, and digitization efforts, emphasizing traditional methods while upholding ethical standards. Strict standard practices govern manuscript movement, with condition reporting and systematic documentation including photographic documentation before and after conservation. Access is restricted to authorized officials, and all movement is supervised by conservators.

Curators and deputy curators oversee storage areas, they regularly inspect the storage and the condition of the manuscripts, ensure optimal conditions for preservation. The storage facility, located on the museum's first floor atop Raisina Hill, is impervious to flood risks. Robust storage practices, including controlled climate regulation through air conditioners and dehumidifiers, mitigate environmental hazards such as mold growth and physical degradation. Regular housekeeping maintains cleanliness, while CCTV surveillance and fencing bolster security measures.

Access to these manuscripts requires permission from the Director-General of the National Museum, with strict control and security oversight by the armed personnel of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). Stringent access protocols and security measures, including regular housekeeping and armed personnel, safeguard against unauthorized handling or theft. Manuscript movement adheres to government norms, with conservators present during handling, transport, and display.

Regular staff training and drills, organized by the museum in collaboration with various national and international organizations, mitigates risks. The building is equipped with A, B, C, and D class fire extinguishing systems and comprehensive fire safety measures. Additionally, the museum's location ensures immunity to flood risks, further fortifying its disaster resilience. Its sound structural integrity, complemented by proper earthing and fire extinguisher measures, provides additional reassurance against potential risks. Continuous monitoring ensures optimal conditions, with artificial lighting maintained within ideal ranges.

Overall, the National Museum upholds its commitment to heritage preservation through strategic planning, advanced conservation practices, strict access controls, and comprehensive disaster preparedness measures, ensuring the manuscript's safety and long-term preservation within the museum's collection.

14 Consultation with Stakeholders

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) designated as the Nodal Centre for the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme in India by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India in 2014. In pursuit of this role, IGNCA embarked on a comprehensive consultation process regarding the nomination of the Manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa of Tulasīdāsa. On 20th June 2023, IGNCA conducted an extensive 6-hour brainstorming session aimed at identifying India's most significant documentary heritage for nomination to the UNESCO Memory of the World registers. Throughout this endeavor, National museum and IGNCA actively engaged stakeholders including communities connected with the documentary heritage and scholars specializing in the field.

15 Other Information to Support the Nomination

No other information is provided to support the nomination.

Check List

- ✓ MOWCAP website reviewed
- ✓ MOWCAP Register Guidelines read
- ✓ Short title provided (section 1)
- ✓ Summary completed (maximum200 word) (section 2)
- ✓ Name and contact details of nominator/s completed (section 3)
- ✓ Authority to nominate completed (section 4)
- ✓ Authority provided by each National Commission when the nomination is from two or more Member States (section 5)
- ✓ Name and contact details of Owner/s or Custodian/s completed (section 5.1, 5.2)
- ✓ Details of legal status completed (section 5.3)
- ✓ Details of accessibility and any limitations completed (section 5.4)
- ✓ Details of copyright status completed (section 5.5)
- ✓ Identity of documentary heritage recorded (6.1-6.5)
- ✓ Bibliography completed (section 6.6)
- ✓ Names, qualifications and contact details of two to three independent experts recorded (section 6.7)
- ✓ Certification that experts have agreed to be contacted about the nomination (section 6.7)
- ✓ Evidence presented of authenticity (section 7)
- ✓ Evidence presented of regional significance (section 8)
- ✓ Comparative analysis completed (section 9)
- ✓ Information presented on uniqueness or rarity (section 9)
- ✓ Gender analysis completed (section 10)
- ✓ Statement of Significance completed (section 11)
- ✓ Risk assessment section completed (section 12)
- ✓ Preservation and access management section completed
- ✓ and relevant documents attached (section 13)
- ✓ Details of consultation with stakeholders provided (section 14)
- ✓ Other relevant information provided - if applicable (section 15)

Advisors

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