

THE MAHABHARATA: A Modern Rendering

Ramesh Menon



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The Mahabharata is the more recent of India's two great Epics, and by far the longer. First composed by the Maharishi Vyasa in verse, some 5000 years ago, it has come down the centuries in the timeless oral tradition of guru and sishya, master and disciple, profoundly influencing the history, culture and art of not only the Indian subcontinent but most of South-east Asia. At 100,000 slokas, couplets, it is more than seven times as long as the Odyssey and the Iliad combined: far and away the longest recorded Epic known to man, which millions also believe to be the greatest story ever told.

The Mahabharata is the very Book of Life – in its sheer variety, majesty, the incredible perfection of its composition and, also, its inescapable violence and tragedy. It has been famously said that nothing exists in this world that cannot be found in the pages of this awesome Legend. The war on Kurukshetra sees ten million warriors slaughtered, bringing the Dwapara Yuga to an end, and ushering in a new and sinister age: the present Kali Yuga, modern times.

At the heart of the Mahabharata nestles the Bhagavad Gita, the Song of God. Senayor Ubhayor madhye – between two teeming armies, Krishna expounds the eternal dharma to Arjuna, his warrior of light. At one level, all the relentless action of the Mahabharata is a quest for the Gita and its sacred stillness. After the carnage, it the Gita that survives – immortal lotus floating upon the dark waters of desolation: the final secret!

With its magnificent cast of characters – human, demonic and divine – and its riveting narrative, the Mahabharata continues to enchant lay readers and scholars alike, the world over. This new rendering brings the Epic to the contemporary reader in vivid modern prose. It brings alive all the excitement, magic and grandeur of the original – for our times.

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