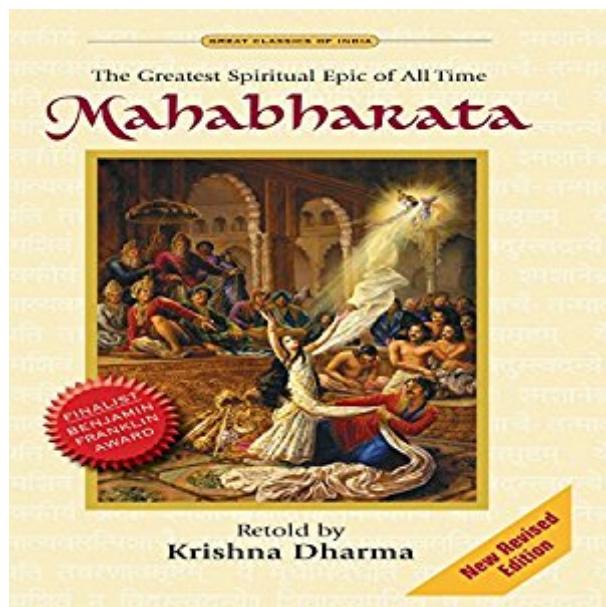


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Mahabharata: The Greatest Spiritual Epic Of All Time



Synopsis

Said to be the world's longest poem, Mahabharata was originally composed in 100,000 Sanskrit verses by the ancient Indian sage Vyasa. Revered as a sacred text within Hinduism, it contains the great spiritual teaching Bhagavad-gita. Krishna Dharma has condensed the epic into a fast paced novel that fully retains the majestic mood of the original. A powerful and moving tale, it recounts the history of the five heroic Pandava brothers, sons of the Emperor Pandu. Cheated of their kingdom and sent into exile by their envious cousins, they set off on a fascinating journey during which we meet gods, sages, mystics and mighty warrior kings. Profound spiritual themes underlie the thrilling narrative, making it one of the world's most revered texts. Culminating in an apocalyptic war, Mahabharata is a masterpiece of suspense, intrigue, and illuminating wisdom.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is pretty much the best English version of the epic. The sole reason for this is that it's pretty much the most complete version that's readily available. It's definitely enjoyable to read... The battles are described in a manner that will keep your attention. There are lots of moral dilemmas that keep you thinking. This is great especially if you're unfamiliar with the Mahabharata. However, Dharma himself admits that this is no scholarly translation. I recommend that you also read other abridgements as well to get a full scope of the story. While the action in this version is well articulated, some of the inbetween discussions and descriptions seem to be a bit drawn-out. I say this in comparison with other versions. For instance, absolutely way too much foreshadowing is given. The entire plot of the story is blatantly given away repeatedly. "This will happen." And it does.

In actuality other versions also have this, as I'm sure it's part of the story. However, it seems as though it wasn't repeated as much in the other versions. For instance, reading another version you might hear Bhima make his threat that he will "drink Dushashana's blood." This might be repeated once or twice throughout the remainder of the story. But in this version, it seems like every page says something like "Arjuna will surely slay Karna, Bhima will surely kill Dhritarashtra's sons, Krishna ordains it, it will happen, yes it will happen." There's absolutely no surprise when it happens at all. In fact it makes reading the otherwise thrilling action sequences annoying because you know the inevitable outcome. Yes, Bhima will strike Duryodhana's thigh. Yes, where Krishna is there is victory...And so on. This is a lot of what makes it drawn-out.

It was very refreshing to find such a readable and exciting rendition of this classic. For the most part, translations of India's spiritual writings are quite heavy going, usually stilted and hard to follow. Not so this one. Written in highly accessible modern prose, it is a fluid narrative that grips the reader like a modern day bestselling novel. This is no mean feat. Having read the original text I know it is a complex tale with many interwoven strands that span vast periods of time. Every character has his or her own fascinating story that ties in with overall theme of the epic, and Dharma has managed to incorporate them all into a tight narrative that never loses the reader. He plainly knows the story inside out, and has cleverly structured his book so that it all fits together into a coherent whole. When I read the original I found myself constantly turning backwards and forwards in order to follow the story, and I was grateful to have it clearly spelled out by Dharma in his book. This treatment of the epic is perhaps unique. Other writers have tried something similar, I know, but in my view none have been quite as successful. And from what I have seen, none of them have shown so lucidly the spiritual import of the Mahabharata. I would say that this is Dharma's greatest contribution to the epic. He brings out the spiritual meaning intended by the original author Vyasa. Being himself a spiritual disciple in the line that comes from Vyasa, he is well positioned to understand its sublime and uplifting message. I found the passages of spiritual instruction, such as the text of the Bhagavad Gita (which forms one chapter of the Mahabharata) particularly enjoyable and very moving.

Sacred text of Hinduism gets blockbuster treatment By James Meek LONDON: Salman Rushdie was threatened with murder for it. William Tyndale was strangled and burned for it.

Altering, challenging or even translating sacred texts can be dangerous. But a British Hindu priest expects only praise, high sales and converts from an epic effort of literary digestion launched next

week: the 100,000-verse Mahabharata, turned by him into a 1,000-page blockbuster novel. The novelization of one of Hinduism's holiest texts by the Manchester-based priest, Krishna Dharma - once Ken Anderson, a merchant navy officer - is already on sale in the US, where it has sold more than 5,000 copies. "I suppose I didn't expect it to be so successful. It's unique, in the sense that there aren't any other English versions like it," said Dharma. The Mahabharata, which contains the core text of Hinduism, the Bhagavad-gita, has been rendered in English before. But previous attempts have been immense verse-for-verse translations by Sanskrit scholars, or slim, super-abridged paperbacks. "I want it to become the definitive English version," said Dharma. "I'm pretty confident it will. There's nothing around to compete." Like the Holy Quran and the Bible, the Mahabharata is believed by Hindus to be largely the work of God (or gods, as some Hindus consider). Five thousand years ago, the half-divine visionary Vyasa is said to have dictated the verses to the elephant-headed being Ganesh. The book's divine origins have not stopped the hard sell. Under the title, the bookjacket proclaims "The Greatest Spiritual Epic of All Time".

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