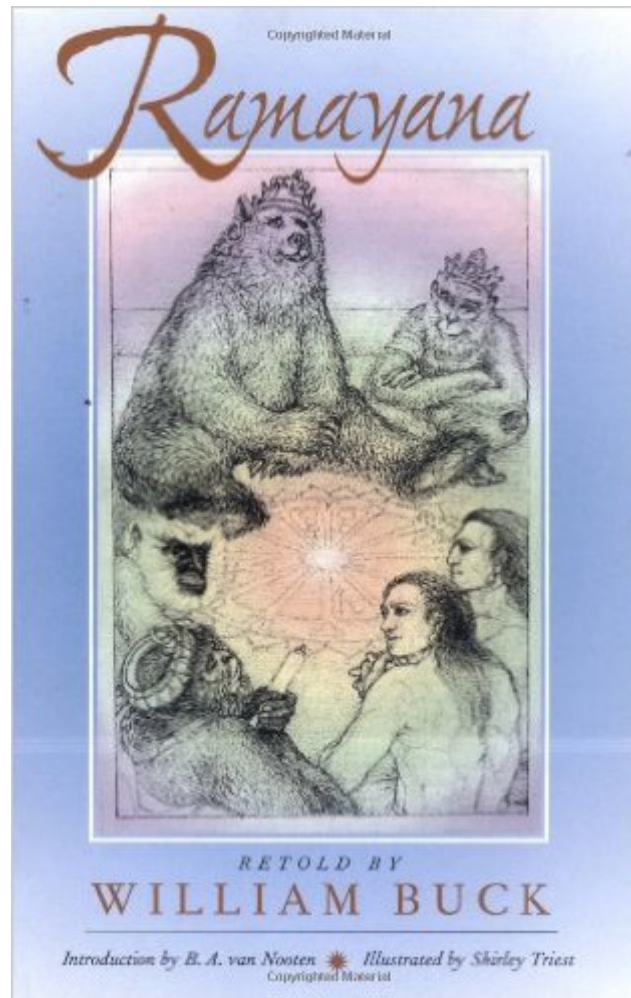


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Ramayana



Synopsis

Few works in world literature have inspired so vast an audience, in nations with radically different languages and cultures, as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, two Sanskrit verse epics written some 2,000 years ago. In Ramayana (written by a poet known to us as Valmiki), William Buck has retold the story of Prince Rama--with all its nobility of spirit, courtly intrigue, heroic renunciation, fierce battles, and triumph of good over evil--in a length and manner that will make the great Indian epics accessible to the contemporary reader. The same is true for the Mahabharata--in its original Sanskrit, probably the longest Indian epic ever composed. It is the story of a dynastic struggle, between the Kurus and Pandavas, for land. In his introduction, Sanskritist B. A. van Nooten notes, "Apart from William Buck's rendition [no other English version has] been able to capture the blend of religion and martial spirit that pervades the original epic." Presented accessibly for the general reader without compromising the spirit and lyricism of the originals, William Buck's Ramayana and Mahabharata capture the essence of the Indian cultural heritage.

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Customer Reviews

In King Lear, a promise given by a foolish old man brings catastrophic changes to the world around him. Likewise, a foolish promise by an elderly king launches the epic Ramayana. Both stories bring forth the depth and strength of the human spirit. King Lear is a tragedy. The Ramayana is also; the author places his noble characters in harm's way to demonstrate their greatness. The Ramayana's chief purpose is to demonstrate the proper exercise of Dharma, the Hindu principle that is often

loosely translated as "Law". The protagonist, Rama, his wife, Sita, his brothers and the army of animals they enlist show through their actions how life is to be spent in the service of truth. Here's the plot (not to give away too much). Rama's father, King Dasratha promises two boons to his youngest wife Kaikeyi. Dasratha abdicates, intending to make Rama king, but Kaikeyi uses her boons on the eve of Rama's ascension to the throne, one to make her son Bharatha king in Rama's stead, the second to banish Rama for 15 years. The king wants to renege on his promises, but Rama refuses to let this happen. He leaves the kingdom willingly. Rama, Sita and Rama's brother Lakshmana live in the jungle for 15 years, in the course of this time, Sita is kidnapped by daemons bent on destroying the world. Rama enlists the help of the bear and monkey kings to recapture her and this is the heart of the story. Now, what makes this story is its characters and their courage. Rama will never break a promise, even when it may cost him his life. Sita and Lakshmana leave the palace for a life spent wearing the bark of trees. The animals, especially the immortal monkey, Hanuman, inspired by the love between Rama and Sita, fight ferociously against their much more powerful foes.

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