

ISSN : 2395-4132

THE EXPRESSION

An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

Bi-Monthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



Impact Factor 3.9

Vol. 3 Issue 6

Dec. 2017

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Bijender Singh

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www.expressionjournal.com

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(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 3.9)

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ISSN: 2395-4132



TULSIDAS' RAMAYANA

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The book is an initiative of Paper Boat- the company that makes drinks. They have introduced and 'illustrated rendition of the timeless Ramayan- story of love and valour.' Amar Chitra Katha has specially designed and printed the mythology in a form of a graphic novel to provide interest to the children. Comic books and graphic novels have increased in popularity over the last few years and many children have turned into super- readers. This way of making stories interesting to read strengthens the reading skills of children, memory and learning (because of the visual aid) and hones the reading comprehension

Ramayana is a tale of fight between gods and demons, Dharma and Adharma and it forms the foundation of Hindu literature and culture. It sings the adventures of Rama as he rescues the abducted Sita from the clutches of King Ravana. With more than 24,000 verses, it becomes one of the longest renditions of Hinduism. It is our culture "handed down from generation to generation, whose light shines bright in each of us." Written in 5th century BCE by Valmiki, its exact origin remains unclear.

The book under review runs over 160 pages and covers the entire Ram CharitManas. Encapsulated in these pages, the book gives us a glimpse of the glorious heritage of the Indian mythology. The book has been divided into five parts; a) The Childhood Days of Ram, b) Ram in Exile, c) The abduction of Sita, d) In search of Sita, and e) Ram the Victorious. It should be emphasised well that the motive of writing this 'handy' Ramayana is to seed interest in children.

The sections have been divided by using a picture the most symbolic episode of the upcoming section as the representative image. This method of section segmentation makes it easy for the young readers to comprehend where the story is leading to. The story of Ramayana revolves around the son of King Dasarath and his wife Kuashalya. One of the king's wives, Kaikeyi, wants her son, Bharat, to throne the kingdom and to fructify this desire, she insists the King to send Rama with his wife into exile for fourteen years. Ram obeys this order and spends years in exile where Sita is abducted by King of Lanka, Ravana, the demonic antagonist of the epic. In the exile, Sita, Rama's wife, is abducted by Ravana and they enter into a long war with the help of the

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mighty team of monkeys led by Hanuman under the ape king Sugriv. The story reaches its climax when Rama, Sita and Laxman return to Ayodhya and are warmly welcomed but Sita is asked to test chastity and accused of being unfaithful since she stayed with Ravana for a long time. Sita invokes help from Mother Earth and is saved but becomes immortal. The story underlines a lot of themes like the trust in matrimony, goodness and virtues, familial loyalty, Hanuman's bravery and untiring service to Lord Rama and many more.

The cover page describes the cardinal scene of Ramayana where Rama is shown embodying power and successfully breaking the bow and winning Sita's hand for marriage. Vivid colors and impressive graphic style adds to one's interest. Readers find the comic style more interesting to read and the story becomes easy to feel and remember. To fully understand what is going on in the story, readers do not just skim through the pages, but hold on carefully to these pictures. The facial expressions of the characters make it a very involving read. They have been exaggerated at some places and so certain scenes come out very well. Some important scenes use striking and bright colors making scenes of war, Hanuman's firing Lanka and many more very stunning. For example, the scene of breaking of the bow by Ram, the sympathetic pathos of villagers making Ram's mud- hut, Laxman cutting Swaroopnaka's nose etc of the section 'The Abduction of Sita' come out very well.

The language used is understandable and overall, the book marks a great read for children, motivating even the most reluctant ones!

Reference:

Bhola, Manya. *Tulsidas' Ramayana*. Edited by Anant Pai. Mumbai: Amar Chitra Katha, 2010. ISBN: 9789385-874-72-7.