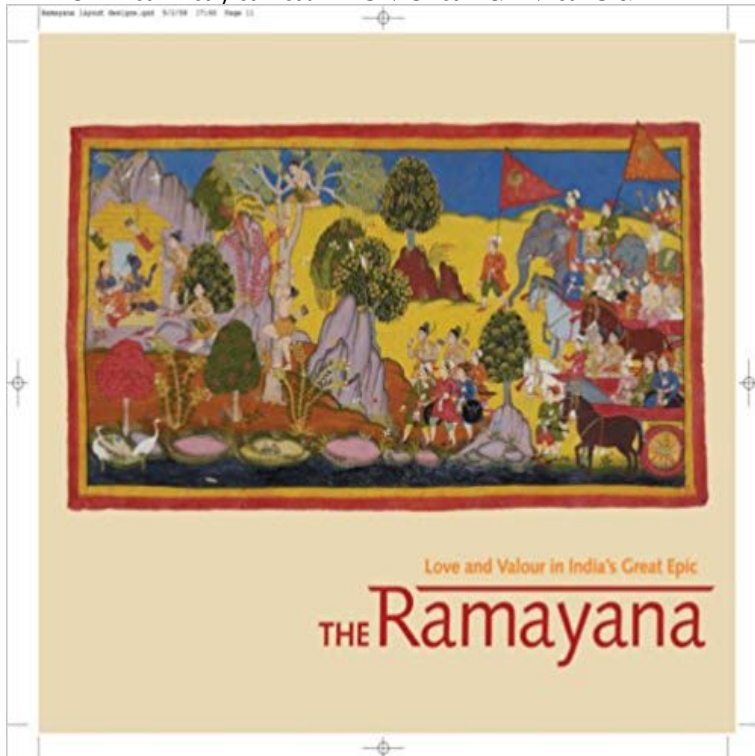


The Ramayana: Love and Valour in India's Great Epic



The ancient Sanskrit epic The Ramayana is no ordinary story one of the most important literary works of India, it traverses the philosophical and devotional ideas of the ancient Hindu sages and tells the bittersweet allegorical tale of Prince Rama and his bride Sita. Exiled for fourteen years in the company of his brother and his bride, Rama is heartbroken when the demon king Ravana sneaks off with Sita in the dark of night; ultimately gathering an army of monkeys and bears to search for Sita, Rama kills Ravana and witnesses Sita's purification by fire which proves her chastity and vindication by the gods and the couple return triumphantly to Ayodhya, beginning the righteous rule of Ram-raj and inaugurating a golden age for mankind. Attributed to the poet Valmiki, the Ramayana has developed over the years of its oral tradition from its beginnings as the story of Rama, an ideal human being who obeys the dharma, into its present shape as the glorious tale of Ramaa supreme deity, avatar of Vishnu, and glorious ruler. The British Library's edition of The Ramayana features 120 sumptuous images selected from some of the Library's greatest treasures over 400 paintings from five of the seven volumes of an illustrated manuscript of the Ramayana prepared between 1649 and 1653. One of the greatest works of seventeenth-century Indian art, these seven books were each illustrated on the grandest scale, with paintings occupying the whole page in four different styles of Mewar painting, including two in the style of the studio master Sahib Dib whose signed work on the sixth book, The Book of Battles, is without par in classical Indian art. Unlike most large series of Indian paintings, this stunning collection has not been dispersed and both the huge scale of the project and the telling of its epic story create in this volume a cumulative effect that is overwhelmingly powerful. This

lavish full-color edition of The Ramayana and the major exhibition at the British Library it accompanies is absolutely not to be missed publishing event by anyone interested in the power of the visual image and the stories that make our cultural heritage what it is today.

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