CONCLUSION

We have thus seen that the Ramayana is the oldest work of ornate poetry. It is revered by the Hindus, being the story of one of the incarnations of our great God Visnu who came to earth to live in a human form in order to exterminate Ravana and his Rākṣasas, so that the world could live in peace. The recitation or listening to a Sūkta, a line or even a Prāṇa from it is believed to confer a great religious merit on the reciter as well as the listener. The whole world adores it as a work of great literary embellishment and creative genius. It is believed to have produced such an influence on the life of the people in India - and even abroad - as no work of the world literature has ever been able to accomplish.

The Rāmāyana was compiled before the Kernel of the Mahābhārata took a coherent form. While the former manifests no acquaintance with the characters and the story of the latter, the latter has a complete knowledge of the story as well as the characters of the former and exhibits that at various places, in many ways. Besides that, the Mahābhārata points to the existence of the practice of burning the widows and depicts a society which had morally degenerated by imbibing such archaic features as polyandry, Hitayoga etc. but had made great advances, materially and politically. It has also been shown that the theory which tries to establish the antiquity of the Ramprakhyāna over the Rāmāyana is not well founded and that the problem
should, therefore, be treated as settled for all times, particularly on the basis of the arguments put forth by V. Raghavan in his work, the Greater Rāmāyaṇa. Further, it has not been found to be true that Kṛṣṇa preceded Rāma, a theory propounded by B.B. Lal on the basis of his excavations at Ayodhya and some other evidences put forth by him. His theory, it has been pointed out, suffers from many defects, besides having an unsound basis which cannot stand the test of a serious scrutiny. Moreover, Rāma was already held and worshipped as an incarnation of Viṣṇu by the time the Mahābhārata assumed its present form.

It is also very much evident that the Rāmāyaṇa is Pre-Buddhist in character. The only passage referring to the Buddha in the epic has been accepted by the scholars as an interpolation and the capital of Kosala in the Rāmāyaṇa has always been called Ayodhya and not Sāketa, a name given to Ayodhya in the times of the Buddha. It has, therefore, been concluded that the epic was composed before Ayodhya was given the new name, Sāketa.

There is no question of a Greek influence on the Ramayana. The Greeks (Yavanas) have been referred to in the epic only in passages which are proved interpolations. The theory of Weber has been also refuted by several scholars saying that the similarities quoted by the author of the theory are such as can be found in the poetry of other nations also, besides the Greeks, and that they are of independent origin.
The political condition of the eastern India depicted in the Ramayana also points to the same fact that the epic was compiled before the times of the Buddha as well as the advent of the Greeks in India.

The Vedas have no trace of the Ramayana, although they have a few names related to the story of the epic.

It is, therefore, safer to put the period of the compilation of the Ramayana between the period generally assigned to the compilation of the Vedas and the times of Buddha, i.e. between 1000 B.C. to 600 B.C.

The Ramayana was composed by Valmiki, who was tenth in the great lineage Varuna, the god of waters. He was also known as Bharagava after his great ancestor Bhargu. His father in many a work has been referred to as sage Krma. It seems that Valmiki fell into disfavour of Brahmanas due to some dispute but regained a high status after undertaking a severe penance. He was, probably, not considered as great a sage as some of his contemporaries like Agastya and Bharadvaja, and could be invited to the sacrifice performed by Rama only after the Ramayana had been recited and Rama had desired him to bring Sita in the Paripada, if he so pleased.

The suggestions about the extent of the Ramayana composed by Valmiki, based on the evidences of the Bhatisayana, the Rasopakhyana, the Padmanavas, etc. cannot be attached any credence. They have been rejected by us in view of the clear
evidences, both internal and external. It is unbelievable that Vālmiki wrote an incomplete poem having no proper beginning and end, making it obligatory for someone else to give it a coherent and complete form. He must have brought out a complete work, a promise he made at the outset.

The Rāmāyaṇa has an idea of the kingless society which, according to many works, existed before the origin of the state and which suffered because of the Ṛtsaṅga conditions allowing no one to claim anything as one's own. There was no security and the people exterminated one another like the fishes in water. The conditions, according to the Rāmāyaṇa, were totally without any Vvacakra activities and, therefore, gave birth to kingship in order to ensure protection of the weaker against the stronger as also to look after the welfare of the citizens.

The idea about the origin of the state has not been elaborated in the epic. However, there are seeds of at least two different theories of origin of the state: the contract theory and the divine theory. It is, however, very clearly said that the king is a god living on the earth in the form of a human being and, therefore, should not be attacked or slighted by the people. In fact the theory of divine origin is the only theory to which the author of the Rāmāyaṇa means to subscribe. The allusion to the contract is nothing but the pointer that there were well defined Dharmas for the ruler as well as the ruled to abide by. But the idea of the divine origin has not
been pushed to absurd extremes as it has been considered obligatory for the king to follow the dictates of Dharma failing which he forfeits his inviolability and becomes liable to be deposed, disobeyed or killed. The epic does not recommend absolute power for the king although it concedes to his divine origin. The duty and obedience on the part of the subjects are not ordained by the divine origin of the kingship but by their own Dharma, and, therefore, do not lead to a total submission and non-resistance to a wicked king.

The Rāmāyaṇa does not provide any definition of the state; but it is well aware of the Santāṇa theory and enumerates all the seven elements of the state one by one, giving a very clear indication that they are the seven essential elements of the state described in the works on polity. The epic uses the term Prakṛti also, to denote the elements of the state as is found in other works.

The Rāmāyaṇa considers each element of the state important because it believes that the state could not function without any one of them. But the king to the epic also is the most important element for he remains the source of all undertakings.

The Rāmāyaṇa prescribes qualities required in every element. The state, according to the epic, could be efficiently administered only if all the elements have the required qualities. Inversion of the qualities have been treated as the calamities
of the constituents. The calamities of all the elements have been judged as equally serious. The remedy suggested by the epic to overcome the calamities of the elements is that the king should remain very vigilant and keep his diplomatic eye open to ensure that every constituent remains without the weaknesses which cause calamities.

Monarchy is the only form of government recognised by the Rāmāyaṇa. The kingship described in the epic is hereditary, based mainly on the law of primogeniture but with due consideration for the qualities required to make an ideal king. The coronation ceremony described in the Rāmāyaṇa shows a clear departure from the ritual described in the Brāhmaṇas for it indicates separation of the Rājasūya sacrifice from it and the Katmapatha also do not figure. The princes were given a proper training and had well-organised educational curriculums comprising teaching of the Vedas along with their auxiliaries, Āvīśika, Vartā and Dandanīti, besides fine arts which made the studies interesting and colourful. The daily routine of the king described in the epic is not as busy as prescribed by Kaṭāṭila. It divided the day into two parts devoted equally to the court-life and personal life in the harem. The first half, we learn, was reserved for Paurakāryas i.e. the work connected with the state including meeting the people, solving their various problems, attending to the matters related to their welfare, looking into administrative matters and inspection
of the army. The first quarter and the last quarter of the night are described being devoted to listening to śabdās to know the conditions prevailing in the state, besides having some entertainment, looking into Arthanāyikā and performing morning and evening rituals. The remaining two parts of the night are prescribed for sleeping in a well protected apartment in the spacious palace which provided all facilities for a happy life for the king and his queens; the palace had, according to the epic, a large number of attendants and was always full of music.

The king wore stitched as well as unstitched garments made from silk and other material. The śātī (modern dhoti) and the Uttarīya were worn differently by men and women; and there is a reference to turban (Uṣasi) also. He and his queens used a number of ornaments, balms and other cosmetics made from sandals and other materials. In fact the king was very particular about his personal decoration, the epic tells us. We are told that the king's food consisted of, inter alia, Anna, fruits and non-vegetarian dishes, and he drank wines and fruit juices. For entertainment, he listened to music and pleasant dialogues, watched dance performances and went out for hunting. He could marry more than one wives, sometimes forced by the need for an issue or political reasons. These marriages, we learn, brought a lot of wealth and articles as Kanyādhanas and established bonds of friendship between the states.
It was believed in the times of the Ramayana that the king was the root of Dharma and the upholder of the law. He was required to follow a definite, narrow path and could not allow himself to be swayed by his own will or passion. He was supposed to be the cause of happiness and miseries experienced by the subjects. The state was a trust and the king was more than a trustee for he was required to sacrifice his own interests for the sake of his people. He was to save his subjects from all sorts of calamities, work for their contentment, make them prosperous and help them in achieving the goals of life through enforcement of the Varpārmanadharmā. He was not a source of law and, therefore, had to perform his duty in accordance with Dharma, Jānakī and Caritrya. There were no defined powers for him but he derived them through the performance of his duty. He was, thus, the supreme head of the executive, the supreme commander of the army and the head of the judiciary. Since he was the root of not only Dharma but of the existence of the state also, there were adequate arrangements for his protection.

It is quite explicit that the terms Sabha and Samiti in the Ramayana have not been used in the sense of political bodies; these denote 'a hall' and 'war' respectively. The only political institution in the times of the Ramayana was the Parīṣad which has been described as an assembly considering various political, administrative and judicial matters. Its constitution had not assumed a definite form; therefore we find
it varying in size and elements on different occasions. The
Parishad was presided over by the king or the Purohita or the
seniormost minister, when the king was not available. It
enjoyed much importance and its members, who had the complete
freedom to express their views in the meetings, were called
Parishadah. The king, we learn, was not bound to accept the
view of the assembly but he always consulted them before taking
major decisions effecting the fortune of the state in one way
or the other. The meetings of this body were held in a Sabha.

The term Parusa-Janapada in the Ramayana denotes two
groups consisting of respectable citizens of the state from the
capital and the rural areas respectively. They were not the
bodies or body comprising members elected by the people. Their
main functions were to represent the public opinion and to
participate in the state functions and meetings such as the
meeting for the selection of a heir-apparent, a coronation
ceremony etc. Their opinion was valued in the state matters,
although it was not binding. Moreover, they helped the state
in administrative matters also, particularly in such jobs as
required an active participation of the people; and in this
respect they were of a great help. There is, however, no doubt
that Valmiki has himself confused the meaning of the term by
using it variously for the purpose of indicating the common
people as well as the important citizens.
The institution of Ratnasa (or Ratnas) had ceased to exist by the times of the epic and the high functionaries of the state had come to be known as the 18 Tirthas. These functionaries were selected, first, as Amatyas, on the basis of the qualifications, and then assigned higher jobs in accordance with their success in the secret tests (Upadha). It is true that of the eighteen Tirthas, there are only eight who have been referred to in the Ramayana as actively performing their respective duties, but that should not be taken to mean that the others did not exist.

The number of counsellors in a state was decided according to its requirement. They were selected from amongst the learned Brahmaṇas and brave Kṣatriyas. The king sought their opinion in all important matters or they themselves expressed their frank views without any fear. It was the considered opinion in the epic period that the Mantris should advise the king on what was good or bad in matters relating to Dharm and Artha, and what was beneficial to the state. They were to say what was good and not only what was sweet to the ears. They were required to lead the army during battles and to constitute the court of justice, besides performing the executive duties assigned to the counsellors barring, of course, the Brahmaṇa advisers. Their position was very high in the state and their opinion had much value for the king who did nothing without apprising himself of their considered view. The Amatyas worked as executives heads of various departments also, and, thus, helped the king.
in providing an efficient administration to the state. It can be believed on the basis of some references in the Rāmāyaṇa that the high functionaries of the state were paid fixed salaries.

The monarchy in the Rāmāyaṇa period was not absolute; it was limited one. There were practicable and effective checks to restrain the king and to stop him from behaving in an arbitrary manner, disregarding the dictates of his Dharma. These checks were exercised through the Pariṣad, religious and spiritual sanctions, absence of power to formulate laws, exhortations, proper education and training, the hermits and the recluse, the counsellors, popular works, fear of public opinion, resistance and agitation. The recognition of people's right to revolt against a tyrant and to depose, imprison or kill him subscribes that the sovereignty resided in the people.

The state, it seems, was not familiar with the Mandala theory of interstate relationship, propounded by the Arthasastra and other works. But it was conversant with the basic concept that one should gain power against the enemy, with the help of allies. The terms Viṣṇu, Mitra and Atri occur frequently in the Rāmāyaṇa and indicate that the two pre-requisites of the Rāja-mandala, i.e. hostility with some and friendship with others were recognised in the period of the epic also, although they were yet to be analysed in the terms of territorial nearness of the states or otherwise. The role of the neutral king was also
not given any consideration. As such the Mandala theory in
the Rāmāyāna age was in its infancy.

The interstate relationship or the foreign policy has
two aspects, namely gaining power through one's own source and
through alliances with powerful kings. Both of these were given
due consideration. The king tried to gain strength by augmenting
his forces, keeping his army happy and contented, looking after
his forts properly and making various types of alliances. The
six guiding principles of foreign relationship were well known
to the kings of the Rāmāyāna period, who showed a great skill
in their application. The use of the three Śaktis, viz. Uṣaṇa,
Prabhū and Mantra, and the four Upāyas, namely Sāma, Dāna, Bheda,
and Danda besides Mānas and Upakṣa were also well known. It was
conceded that war should be resorted to only when there was no
possibility of avoiding it and when the conditions were
favourable.

The state had a standing army. It is generally spoken
of having only four organs, but we know for certain that the
navy also existed as the fifth organ. The army was always kept
in a ready-to-fight condition by a daily inspection. The
Commander-in-Chief of the army was called Senāpati who was
assisted by Malayakas. Besides, the Gulmas (small units) were
looked after by Gulmapatia.

The march against the enemy was organised during the
period between the months of Karthika and Jyeṣṭha. The movements
were kept secret, and the routes and the camping sites were
selected, cleared and protected properly. The engineers cleared
the way, and built bridges; the advance party looked for the
hidden enemy forces. Before the march, the king or the leader
spoke to the Sanāsukhyas about the plan of march and the strategy;
he exhorted the soldiers to put in their best for the sake of
the monarch. During the march and at the camping sites the
soldiers were entertained by the actors and dancers who also
accompanied. Before the actual fighting, the soldiers were
deployed in suitable formations called Vīyukas. While fighting,
the soldiers followed the accepted ethics of warfare and gave
quarters to those who deserved. The warriors wore armours of
quite an advanced nature and used a good assortment of weapons
known by various names, besides resorting to fighting with bare
hands. The entrenched enemy was forced to come out by filling
the moats and by the method called 'storming'. The soldiers,
who took part in the war and fought bravely, were suitably
rewarded.

The state in the epic period employed a large number of
spies within its own territory and in other states to know
precisely what was happening. These spies were known as Cārka,
Cārka and Cārana, who disguised themselves differently to
collect the required information, known as Pravrtti, by using
various methods. Beautiful courtesans were also employed as
spies. The states had counter espionage system also to detect the enemy spies. The accepted diplomatic norms conceded inviolability to Dātas under all circumstances but the Cāras were normally put to death. The epic tells us that there were no permanent embassies; but friendly missions with large amounts of costly presents were often sent to the allied states on several occasions and for various purposes. The feudatory kings were referred to as Śāmantas who had to obey the sovereign and pay him the Bāli. Nevertheless, the state of the Rāmāyaṇa period was not expansionist. It did not engage itself in unnecessary war. But if it had to fight, it fought a fair war, never resorting to methods which were against the dictates of Dharma unless forced by an unscrupulous enemy.

The Rāmāyaṇa indicates that the kingdom was divided into two main divisions, namely Pura and Janapada. The Pura was the capital city and the Janapada denoted the rest of the country (or the whole country), which had agricultural and pastoral villages called Grāma or Gavya and Ghosa respectively. The whole of the country was administered with the help of the Vīthas. The local administration of the Pura was managed by a prince or some other high officer appointed by the king, with the help of the Puraudānas and the villages had the Mahattaras to supervise over. The palace administration was under the charge of the Dwārādhyakṣa (also referred to as Dravīthasa) and the Stryādhyakṣa who performed their duties with the help of a number of assistants.
The army's needs for chariots, elephants, horses, soldiers, arms etc. made it imperative for the state to have some permanent arrangement for their procurement. The whole range of arms, the various breeds of horses and elephants and the types of chariots described in the Ramayana imply that the state had an arrangement for the purpose.

The judicature in the times of the Ramayana was fairly developed and justice was promptly distributed. The king used his coercive power righteously and effectively to restrain the unrestrained ones. The punishments were severe but in accordance with the seriousness of the crime and the culprits' capacity to endure. The king was the supreme judge as well as the appellate authority. He decided the cases in consultation with his counsellors and Naigamas, keeping to himself the final authority. He could overrule the judgement of other members of the court and reopen an already decided case for a fresh consideration. There were other courts, too, besides the king's court, which were presided over by Amatyas. Dharma, Lokaytta and Garitya were the sources of law for deciding the cases. The law-suits had four steps, namely enquiry, witness, proof and decision. If no evidence was available, the accused, particularly of Mahabhiyoga, was allowed to prove innocence with the help of ordeals. The judges (others than the king himself) were required to be highly learned and well versed in scriptures, besides possessing the qualifications of Amatyas. The presence
of Naigamas in the court of the king establishes the antiquity of the jury in India.

The state knew the importance of sound finances and, therefore, engaged itself in all such fair activities which augmented the treasury. The main source of income was the Bali which was the tax charged at the equitable rate of 1/6 of the produce and income. This rate was never changed. The tax was collected without any violence for it was believed that the harsh collection of tax brought bad name to the king. The Bali, which came mainly from the agriculturists and traders, could be paid to the state in cash or kind. Besides the Bali, the other sources of the state's income were the state-properties, the fines, the tributes and gifts received from other kings and the citizens, the treasure troves and the unclaimed properties. Dhanadhyanas was the officer in charge of the exchequer. He collected the wealth coming from various sources, kept the account and provided money for the items of expenditure.

The various heads of expenditure in the Ramayana are:
(i) Expenditure for the sake of the gods (ii) Expenditure for Pitayas (iii) Expenditure for Brahmanas (iv) Expenditure for guests (v) For warriors (vi) For friends. The major item of expenditure was the maintenance of the standing army, besides the royal house-hold and the administrative machinery. The principle of budgeting was that the expenditure should never
exceed the income of the state and that the treasure should always be augmented for the sake of sound finances. Moreover, the expenditure was always to be made for the right causes and for deserving ones.

The state was totally devoted to the cause of people's welfare. The king exerted himself a lot to see that his subjects were happy and contented and strived for their happiness. The Varna-mahâ-râja, the social order and the common law were considered most important, and, therefore, were properly guarded. The people were protected against all sorts of calamities, helped in distress and provided opportunities of employment. The agriculturists, the traders and the cowherds were also suitably looked after. The state helped in creating irrigation facilities and provided safety to traders on interstate routes. Those who could not earn their livelihood themselves were provided with material and moral help. Besides that, the state maintained parks, gardens, places to provide potable water and encouraged festivals and social gatherings for the entertainment of the citizens. The hygiene of the country and the health of the subjects were also looked after properly by the state. The king worked for the moral welfare of the people and helped educational institutes to spread literacy and knowledge among his people. He encouraged fine arts and literature in the state by appreciation...
of the artists and writers and by giving them cash awards.
The Rāmāyana tells us that the king's ideal was to remain
favourite of his subjects at all costs. Even his dear life
was not as dear to him as his fame as a righteous king.