

## PREFACE

To quote Armando Menezes, "There is a secret fellowship that spans time and space to make all the classics of the world one kin." The Iliad and the Ramayana, the truest manifestations of the human spirit, are akin to each other in such a universal manner. There is a deep correspondence of thought and spirit between them and they share a true fellowship across time and space. Both the Iliad and the Ramayana have a bewilderingly large scope and their uniquely different cultural contexts almost make a comparative study appear futile. But, on a closer study, one can see, in the midst of the very divergences, a common concern with humanity and its destiny.

A comparative study of the Iliad and the Ramayana has received the attention of many. But there has been as far as I know, no full length book making a detailed study of the two epic traditions of the West and the East. I thought therefore, that the subject was worth-exploring. While a few writers comparing the two epics, have written only in a broad and sweeping manner about the general aspects, I have tried to make a comparative study, in depth, of perhaps the most significant aspects of the poems. This study is aimed at clearing the popular confusion about terms like the

'heroic epic', etc. and establishing healthier traditions of comparison and contrast of classics belonging to two major cultural traditions.

As for the texts, for the Ramayana, I have made use of the Critical Edition, brought out by the Oriental Institute, Baroda, the English verse translation of R.T.H.Griffith and a Kannada edition, with the original Sanskrit text with translation. The Kannada edition of the Ramayana is based on the text edited by S.Kuppuswamy and published from Madras in 1934. I have mainly depended on the original Sanskrit text and have used the English translations by R.T.H.Griffith and M.L.Sen for the benefit of those who do not know Sanskrit. As for the Iliad, I regret to say that I have tried to know "something, perhaps, of the glory that was Greece though without its language." I have therefore, relied on the Penguin edition of the Iliad, since it is both effective and easily accessible. I have taken advantage of the opinion on which most critics agree that it is the poetry which matters most and not so much the textual problems and I have mainly concerned myself with the epics as poems that belong to the native living traditions only and not with the much-vexed textual problems of the epics. I have concentrated on the poetry alone as a field for fruitful study. The deeper preoccupations of Homer and Valmiki are effectively conveyed

through their poems and the Iliad and the Ramayana are significant to us as great works of art.

I have tried to avoid as far as possible a rambling kind of criticism and concentrated on the text of the epics. I thought that there was a need for comparing the epics comprehensively from their most significant perspective as profound visions of the inevitable human situation.

I am aware I have ventured on a very arduous and almost impossible task and with inherent handicaps like the ignorance of the Greek language, etc. But unless someone undertakes such a task no new ground may be broken at all. I firmly hope that the subject will receive a better treatment from those who are better equipped. My very imperfections may provoke a more competent person to tackle the subject. But I have undertaken the task with the conviction that the subject is worth a serious study and I have done my best with it.

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Vijaya. K. Guttal.