

The RAMAYANA

Selections from

a traditional Hindu Ballad of

YEARNING

LOVE

EXILE

SORROW

vocal — B. O. Girwarr

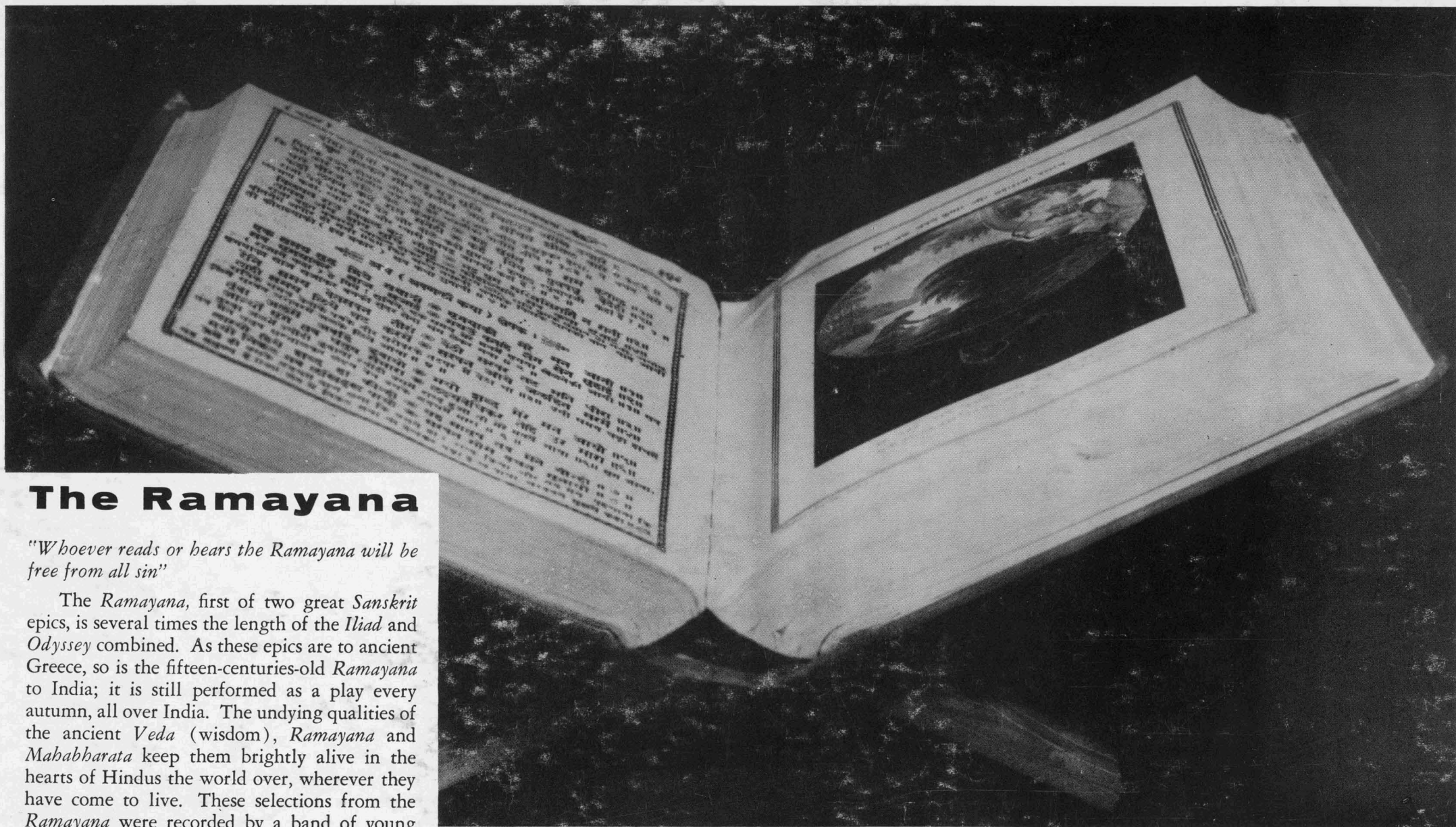


RAMA

compatible
SUPER-STEREO
plays on any machine

"Whoever reads or hears the Ramayana will be free from all sin."

Valmiki Brahmin risbi



The Ramayana

"Whoever reads or hears the Ramayana will be free from all sin"

The *Ramayana*, first of two great *Sanskrit* epics, is several times the length of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined. As these epics are to ancient Greece, so is the fifteen-centuries-old *Ramayana* to India; it is still performed as a play every autumn, all over India. The undying qualities of the ancient *Veda* (wisdom), *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* keep them brightly alive in the hearts of Hindus the world over, wherever they have come to live. These selections from the *Ramayana* were recorded by a band of young men in Trinidad to whom the keeping of the flame is of first importance.

The *Ramayana* is said to have been composed by the Brahmin ascetic Valmiki who, having retired from the world into the forest, was confronted one day by the divine sage Narada who recited to him the story of Rama. The roots of this great work undoubtedly extend into a period long before that of Valmiki, at least to the twentieth or thirtieth century before Christ.

Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu (Vedic and later Hindu god), was the Lotus-eyed first son of King Dasaratha of Kosala. Just prior to the occasion of his official installation as Crown Prince and successor to the throne, Rama was betrayed and banished into exile in a plot fomented by his stepmother in favor of her own son Bharat. Bharat, away at the time and not an accomplice to the affair, returned just in time to see his father, the old king, expire of grief over the affair, and set out into the dark forest of Dandaka to find and restore to the throne Rama and his lovely young wife Sita. Finally he found Rama and Sita on Chitrakuta Mountain, but was unable to shake Rama from his determination to carry out his father's banishment. Weeping, Bharat returned with Rama's golden sandals which he placed on the throne, became an ascetic himself, and ruled as regent until Rama's return.

The *Ramayana* tells at length of the romance, dangers and hardship of these years of banishment, of the fierce battles fought by Rama against the forest Rakshasas (demons) and of the female Rakshasi who one day after catching sight of Rama was consumed by an unchaste desire to have him for her husband. Rebuffed, the demoness returned to her brother Rakshasa and described to him Sita's virtuous charms in such glowing terms that he then came to desire Sita for himself, concocting a complicated ruse to lure Rama away from his leafy hut while Sita was captured and spirited away.

The campaign of Sita's rescue by Rama which follows is fraught with the overcoming of insuperable obstacles and magical feats often found in great epic writings, terminating in her fiery rescue from the city of Lanka in Ceylon. When Sita is finally brought into the presence of her husband Rama, she voluntarily undergoes an ordeal by fire to prove her innocence and

freedom from defilement by the evil Rakshasas. In spite of her proven purity, when slanders concerning her are rumored among Rama's people, he sacrifices his happiness and banishes her to save the kingdom. Sita finds refuge in Valmiki's forest, where she bears Rama's twin sons, to whom as they grow Valmiki teaches the *Ramayana*. Sita falls into the habit of prayer, and one day as she prays to Mother Earth, the earth opens, a goddess appears, takes the beautiful Sita, and disappears with her forever.

This album speaks of that portion of the epic where Bharat, in search of Rama, encounters Nishad, telling him of the virtues of Sita who has abandoned the luxuries of the throne to accompany her lord and husband into exile.

"Now that I gaze at the grassy bed of Sita, is not my breast bursting with sorrow? Surely it is more excruciating to hear than a thousand thunderbolts!"

E. C.

Satyakama Jabala, speaking of Brahman —
"If you were to tell this to a dry stick, branches would grow and leaves spring from it."

Prayer from the Upanishads —

"Lead me from the unreal to the real! Lead me from darkness to light! Lead me from death to immortality!"

Traditional 5-piece Indian orchestra

M. Ramaglan	Dhantal
S. Ramsaroop	Tabla
B. O. Girwarr	Vocal
R. Seepersad	Viol
R. Dass	Harmonium
B. Dharson	Kartal

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