

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION WRO – Pune

**PROFORMA FOR SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION AT THE TIME OF
SENDING THE FINAL REPORT OF THE WORK DONE ON THE PROJECT**

1. Title of the Project: ***The Ramayana as an epic: A Western Perspective***
2. NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR :***Dr Anand H. Vyas***
3. NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE INSTITUTION : **Pramukh Swami Science &
H.D.Patel Arts College, S.V.Campus, Kadi:382715**
4. UGC APPROVAL LETTER NO. AND DATE :

File No.23-310/07 (WRO) & 16-01-2008

Appendix-A

Objective of the Research:

The Indian Epic of Valmiki, **The Ramayana** is larger and higher than what Aristotle meant by the concept of epic in the West. And as Aristotle said that epic and tragedy differentiates in the narrative technique only otherwise the pattern of action in both is the same i.e. tragic. This too is largely found in **The Ramayana**. The main objectives of the present study can be briefly summarised as,

- (i) Study of the Western Poetics of Aristotle compared with the Indian Poetics where we find the larger and deeper study of the human emotions through Rasa and Dhvani.
- (ii) Study of the Western epics and a comparison of them with **The Ramayana** on the philosophical, religious as well as literary grounds.
- (iii) Study of the different patterns of tragedy from Greek to Modern and try to reflect them in the various characters of **The Ramayana**.
- (iv) The study includes the others Indian works influenced by **The Ramayana** by Valmiki. And how they have approached this tale in their works.

- (v) At the core of the research lies a thorough study of **The Ramayana** by Valmiki.

I. Appendix-B

Phase : I

Annual Report of the Research Work:

The Heroic Ideal of the Western Epics is discernable in **The Ramayana**. But under this surface concept of epic, **The Ramayana** encompassed a grand philosophy of life, the ultimate definition of Dharma i.e. Swadharma. Beyond the physical conflict lies the greater conflict i.e. a war between man and his conscience. Thus, **The Ramayana** has not yet adequately attracted critical notice. It is essentially tragic in Western sense of the term. It is not simply a tragedy. It is a grand tragedy of a brilliant epoch constituted of numerous tragedies. The stories of its principal characters illustrate tragic rhythm of an action growing from their fatal flaws and ending in their fall and death. They illustrate various patterns of tragedy clearly developed in the Western tradition of literature and discussed in learned works on tragedy as a literary form.

(ii) Introduction:

Sri Aurobindo writes about Valmiki and Vyasa, the authors of **The Ramayana** and **The Mahabharata** that they wrote with a sense of their

function as architects and sculptors of life, creative exponents, fashioners of significant forms of national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society a certain strain of philosophic ideas runs through these poems and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception of living presentation². **The Ramayana** has always attracted the attention not only of the Indian critics but also of the Western critics. It is regarded as "the most controversial and criticized epic"³. It has the grace and a unique vitality on account of which it has become an inextricable part of the collective psyche of India. It exhibits in addition the features of tragedy and epic Aristotle talks about except, artistically required size. **The Ramayana**, the first work of Sanskrit literature, is the best example of tragedy. Yet it is surprising that tragedy as a drama has not developed in the history of classical Sanskrit literature. Bhasa's **Urubhangam** and **Karnabharam** and Bhavbhuti's **Uttat Ramcharitam** appear to be exceptions. But even here the pattern of action which begins with the hero's error of judgement or some expression of his weakness and concludes with consequent suffering and death does not appear clearly. Often the flaw is observed in the society they live in, and they look like the victims of erroneous social attitudes. I have attempted a study of some of the characters. It is all the more surprising that texts similar to Aristotle's **Poetics** theorizing about the nature, structure and function of tragedy, have not followed this epic. There is more in it to justify the formulations of Aristotle and Bradley than there is in the Western Epics. Yet somehow the theoretical task has never been attempted. The Sanskrit Poetics are Confined to the analysis of the dominant emotion (Rasa) and indirect suggestion (Dwani). Our critical grasp of life and of the life reflected in literature has been traditionally very weak. Matthew Arnold describes

literature as 'criticism of life'. But classical Sanskrit literature by and large does not appear to be a criticism of contemporary socio-political reality. Only the ancient epics, **The Ramayana** and **The Mahabharata**, written centuries before the beginning of the classical period, are truly the criticism of life. It is a massive recordation ensuring the nation's hoary and still living tradition that is the nectarine clue connecting the present with the past and the future⁴.

Aristotle's statement that epic poetry has a great, a special capacity for enlarging its dimensions, is seen concretized in **The Ramayana**, where Valmiki has effectively comprehended almost all the aspects of life. That way it is difficult to find a parallel of it in the literature of the Western world. Homer, in **Iliad**, covers only a part of the war of Troy which lasted for ten years. He aimed at thematic unity, artistically acceptable magnitude and beauty of form free from superfluities. Valmiki, unlike Homer, aims at cosmic majesty of God pervading and transcending our universe: Obviously it includes our terrestrial stream with its petty socio-political and psychological conflicts and "comprehensive essence" of a culture at the apex of its progress.

In Milton, on the other hand, is seen Goodness and God-fearing rectitude as an ideal. Adam and Eve suffer because they fall short of the ideal. Yet what we discover in Milton is dogmatic Christianity, not universally acceptable wisdom. **The Ramayana** is a mine of universally acceptable ethical and spiritual wisdom. It presents a picture-gallery of truly great moral heroes. **The Ramayana** is a work of a morally and spiritually mature culture. There is nothing comparable to it in the Western epics. Through the character of Rama, Valmiki, the seer poet, follows a sublime Heroic ideal of a sound, peaceful and harmonious social order⁵.

Phase : II

Summary of the Final Research Project Report

The Heroic Ideal of the Western Epics is discernable in **The Ramayana**. But under this surface concept of epic, **The Ramayana** encompassed a grand philosophy of life, the ultimate definition of Dharma i.e. Swadharma. Beyond the physical conflict lies the greater conflict i.e. a war between man and his conscience. Thus, **The Ramayana** has not yet adequately attracted critical notice. It is essentially tragic in Western sense of the term. It is not simply a tragedy. It is a grand tragedy of a brilliant epoch constituted of numerous tragedies. The stories of its principal characters illustrate tragic rhythm of an action growing from their fatal flaws and ending in their fall and death. They illustrate various patterns of tragedy clearly developed in the Western tradition of literature and discussed in learned works on tragedy as a literary form.

INTRODUCTION

“Tragedy, as a literary form like all culture of the West originated and developed in the ancient Greece. It achieved perfection of its own kind in the hands of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles. In the province of art practice precedes the theory and creation comes before criticism. A genius fumbling its way for ever fuller expression does not wait for some highbrow philosopher to guide his creative urge. And so before the rules of writing were formulated, the tragic genius blossomed forth to the highest degree of splendour and beauty among the Hellenic people who had tremendous zest for life and who loved passionately the joys of this world. Aristotle was later to tell us what the writers of tragedy thought and how they wrote. But there was no Aristotle to dictate their genius, which is a law unto itself.

“Tragedy is the spectacle of man at grips with destiny, usually succumbing to the strain of the strife, as much on account of the badness of his situation as the weakness of his character in a world which promises joys but gives in the end only pains and death.

“Between the ancient tragedy and the modern, between the Attic plays and the absurd drama, there lies the period of growth and development of about twenty five centuries. The beginning and the end appear to be different like the infancy and old age of the same individual. But they are also organically one despite the dividing gulf of time, and the tradition will still run forward through enriching changes remaining ever the same notwithstanding them.” Says **Dr. Jagdish V. Dave.**

EPIC AND TRAGEDY :

For the purposes of this thesis we are not concerned with tragedy as a dramatic type. We are primarily interested in 'Tragedy' as a pattern of action described in the above paragraphs, which is discovered as much in certain epic narratives as in the plays and play-lets produced for stage performance. Apropos the chapter 23 of *Poetics* must be fully quoted.

“As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single meter, the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be. For as the sea-fight at Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time, but did not tend to any one result, so in the sequence of events, one thing sometimes follows another, and yet no single result is thereby produced. Such is the practice, we may say, of most poets. Here again, then, as has been already observed, the transcendent excellence of Homer is manifest. He never attempts to make the whole war of Troy the subject of his poem, though that war had a beginning and an end. It would have been too vast a theme, and not easily embraced in a single view. If, again, he had kept it within moderate limits, it must have been over-complicated by the variety of

the incidents. As it is, he detaches a single portion, and admits as episodes many events from the general story of the war_ such as the Catalogue of the ships and others-thus diversifying the poem. All other poets take a single hero, a single period, or an action single indeed, but with a multiplicity of parts. Thus did the author of the *Cypria* and of the little *Iliad*. For this reason the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* each furnish the subject of one tragedy, or, at most, of two ; while the *Cypria* supplies materials for many, and the little *Iliad* for eight-the Award of the Arms, the *Philoctetes*, the *Neoptolemus*, the *Eurypylus*, the *Mendicant Odysseus*, the *Laconian Woman*, the *Fall of Ilium*, the *Departure of the Fleet*.”²

Aristotle discusses in the subsequent chapter of the advantages and disadvantages of both Tragedy and Epic as the forms of literature which are similar in substance but different from each other in the technique of representation. He writes:

“Epic poetry has, however, a great-a special-capacity for enlarging its dimensions, and we can see the reason. In Tragedy we cannot imitate several lines of actions carried on at one and the same time; we must confine ourselves to the action on the stage and the part taken by the players. But in Epic poetry; owing to the narrative form, many events simultaneously transacted can be presented; and these, if relevant to the subject, add mass and dignity to the poem. The Epic has here an advantage, and one that conduces to grandeur of effect, to diverting the mind of the hearer, and relieving the story with varying episodes. For sameness of incident soon produces satiety, and makes tragedies fail on the stage.”

Both Tragedy and Epic, according to Aristotle, are the forms of objective art. The poet has not to speak about himself, his own personal ideas and emotions, but about the world of nature and men external to himself. There is no room for the poet to start anywhere in the action and dialogue of the characters. But an Epic is a tale told by the poet in person. He creates the characters and events by description and narration. He is the only speaker

here. Can he then, altogether escape his subjectivity in the narration of his tales? Aristotle's answer is that he should.

“Homer, admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself. The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator. Other poets appear themselves upon the scene throughout, and imitate but little and rarely. Homer, after a few prefatory words, at once brings in a man, or woman, or other personage; none of them wanting in characteristic qualities, but each with a character of his own.”

Tragedy as a drama cannot present everything on the stage. One cannot imagine the representation of battles, murder, death, suicide and even larger scenes of nature such as rivers, mountains and ocean. Only limited action and limited number of characters can be brought upon the stage which is a small place. That is why poetic relations of larger events and scenes are indispensable to drama. The Epic clearly enjoys an advantage over tragedy in all this.

“The element of the wonderful is required in Tragedy. The irrational, on which the wonderful depends for its chief effects, has wider scope in Epic poetry, because there the person acting is not seen. Thus, the pursuit of Hector would be ludicrous if placed upon the stage—the Greeks standing still and not joining in the pursuit, and Achilles waving them back. But in the Epic poem the absurdity passes unnoticed. Now the wonderful is pleasing; as may be inferred from the fact that everyone tells a story with some addition of his own, knowing that his hearers like it.”⁵

As in the tragedy as a drama so also in the Epic that is a tragedy or tragedies in narrative,

“the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities. The tragic plot must not be composed of irrational parts. Everything irrational should, if possible, be excluded; or, at all events, it should lie outside the action of the play....”⁶

“If he describes the impossible, he is guilty of an error; but the error may be justified, if the end of the art be thereby attained (the end being that already mentioned), —if, that is, the effect of this or any other part of the poem is thus rendered more striking. A case in point is the pursuit of Hector. If, however, the end might have been as well, or better, attained without violating the special rules of the poetic art, the error is not justified : for every kind of error should, if possible, be avoided.

"Again, does the error touch the essentials of the poetic art, or some accident of it ? For example, —not to know that a hind has no horns is a less serious matter than to paint it inartistically.

"Further, if it be objected that the description is not true to fact, the poet may perhaps reply, -'But the objects are as they ought to be' : just as Sophocles said that he drew men as they ought to be; Euripides, as they are. In this way the objection may be met. If, however, the representation be of neither kind, the poet may answer,-'This is how men say the thing is.' This applies to tales about the gods. It may well be that these stories are not higher than fact nor yet true to fact : ...as in the passage about the arms : 'Upright upon their butt-ends stood the spears'. This was the custom then, as it now is among the Illyrians.

"Again, in examining whether what has been said or done by someone is poetically right or not, we must not look merely to the particular act or saying, and ask whether it is poetically good or bad. We must also consider by whom it is said or done, to whom, when, by what means, or for what end; whether, for instance, it be to secure a greater good, or avert a greater evil.”⁷

"The element of the irrational, and, similarly, depravity of character, are justly censured when there is no inner necessity for introducing them. Such is the irrational element in the introduction of Aegeus by Euripides and the badness of Menelaus in the Orestes.”⁸

Aristotle considers in the concluding chapter of the *Poetics* the question as to which of the two types, Tragedy and Epic, is superior to the other. The customary view in

Aristotle's times was that the Epic, being less vulgar and addressing itself to more cultivated public, was the better and higher type. It is questionable whether the audiences of the two genres are qualitatively different. However, the advantages of the epic over the tragedy, are clear. An epic is available to you whenever you want to read. It does not depend upon the actors and the theatre, which are not always available. You can have it read aloud to you if you cannot read it yourself.

But Aristotle does not agree with this view. According to him Tragedy includes the elements of the epic. But there are some special features of tragedy by which it realizes a more powerful effect than that of an epic. You can read tragedy as a literary text and enjoy its effect imaginatively if you do not find the theatre and the actors. Therefore it cannot be said that the epic has any advantage over tragedy. But tragedy has in addition to the plot of the story the elements of music and spectacle, which the epic lacks :

“Moreover, the art (tragedy) attains its end within narrower limits; for the concentrated effect is more pleasurable than one which is spread over a long time and so diluted. What, for example, would be the effect of the Oedipus of Sophocles, if it were cast into a form as long as the Iliad?”⁹

In view of all this Aristotle is right in describing Tragedy as an aesthetically superior form of art to the epic. Tragedy illustrates the dictum; 'the small is beautiful'. Its plot is neatly constructed of strictly necessary elements, whereas superfluities abound in the epic. The tragedy straightway drives towards its end, whereas the progress of the epic plot is frequently impeded by digressions.

But the aesthetic criterion is not the only criterion to judge of a genre. There are other considerations as well. A tragedy can never involve the criticism of life on an epic scale. An epic embodies not only a particular period of time, but also an entire tradition of culture which has fully ripened in that period. The popularity of the epic consolidates the

culture which has produced it, and creates in its own turn a stronger culture, at times a nation. It becomes a part of the collective consciousness of its people. It becomes a mine of material for the dramatic art. The Greek tragedians took their stories from their epic. An epic includes many tragedies. It is comprehensive in character, while tragedy by its very nature is restricted.

TRAGIC VIEW OF THE WORLD :

Schopenhauer says :

“The true sense of tragedy is the deeper insight, that it is not his own individual sins that the hero atones for, but original sin, i.e., the crime of existence itself.”¹⁰

There is little truth in the assumption that tragedy is born of a pessimistic view of life. In fact pessimists have never produced tragedies. Only a nation, a culture, bubbling with enthusiasm for life, for ever better living, have produced tragedies. Ancient Hellenic civilization had been such a positive culture. So was the culture of European Renaissance. Tragedy and Epic as the forms of art flourished in both. Tragedy has continued to grow ever since Renaissance both in narrative and dramatic forms only because the Western culture has been since then consistently positive. The dark ages of Christianity with their negative world view, with their obsession with post-lapsarian terrestrial evils, produced no tragedy. The ancient India of the times of *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* which had been profoundly affirmative of life, similarly could produce the tragic epics. But the post Buddhist India, the later phase of the ancient Indian culture, obsessed with the evils of birth, death, disease, old age and transience of the world, could produce none.

Tragedy is a genre of literary if not strictly dramatic art. It is not philosophy pure and simple. Yet it requires certain philosophical attitudes to the world. There are always strong

metaphysical questions, if not categorical conclusions. William G. Mc Collom is right when he observes :

“Tragedy presents a poetic cosmology and is committed to a metaphysical attitude. Even where it is impossible to place a tragic dramatist within a restricted philosophical perspective, his play encourages a metaphysical frame of mind, a concern with the broadest possible questions. The play, if not the playwright, seems to ask, "What kind of world do we live in ? How are we to judge man's life ? Are man's values those of the world?" Such preoccupations are fundamentally metaphysical, and if the metaphysical enterprise is wasted effort, then tragedy can tell us nothing about the world as a world.”¹¹

All this applies as much to dramatic as to narrative tragedies. Epics, in fact, are more Philosophical than tragedies.

But a tragedian is not detached from life as a philosopher is supposed to be. He loves the world, and is sad that man cannot stay there forever. He is gifted with 'negative capability' of Keats' description which sees half truths intuitively. The mystery of life attracts him, but its full unravelment is beyond him. He does not even try to realize it. After an encounter with his father's ghost, Hamlet says :

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”¹²

This illustrates the faith of a tragic dramatist. This, however, does not mean that ours is the faultless world, or the best possible one as conceived by Leibnitz, the philosopher. It is, in fact, an imperfect and mysterious world. It may not be positively a bad and devilish scheme of things. But it is not quite after heart's desire. It is natural for man to expect happiness from the world, which surrounds him. But its happenings of 'neutral tints' might as frequently spell happiness by converging positively towards his cherished desires and

aspirations, as sorrow by diverging away from them, ever guided by chance. The world, anyway, is far short of the ideal, and on account of his obstinate demands and desires from it, the tragic hero or the characters in tragedy never feel at home in it.

The world in tragedy is at once the home of man and a place of exile. It is the home in that he is destined to live and die there. A place of exile because it does not satisfy his instinctive demands and quest for happiness. This makes for what Albert Camus calls the absurdity of existence or a state of divorce between consciousness and the world. The characters in tragedy, consequently, "being weary of this worldly bars", often turn to the idea of suicide as a way of deliverance from the prison-house of the world. They usually develop distaste for life. Sophocles writes;

"Say what you will, the greatest boon is not to be;
But, life begun, soonest to end is best,
And to that bourne from which our way began
Swiftly return."¹³

But there has been no identical way of regarding and interpreting the suffering and the mysteries of the world. The point of view differs from one tragedian to another. Every tragic dramatist sees the world through the glasses of his own temperament and reacts to it with his own peculiar attitude. "The playwright may suggest that the world is essentially good" though it might seem superficially evil. It is governed by the benevolent god. Suffering purifies and restitutes the order that was infringed. It appears outrageous only on account of our ignorance. The enlightened find it positive and necessary. Such were the views of Aeschylus, the oldest of the ancient tragic dramatists of Greece. The chorus in *Agamemnon* sings;

Only they whose hearts have known
Zeus, the conqueror and the friend,
They shall win their vision's end;

Zeus, the guide, who made man turn
Thought-ward, Zeus, who did ordain
May by suffering shall learn.
So the heart of him, again
Aching with remembered pain,
Bleeds and sleepeth not, until
Wisdom comes against his will.
'Tis the gift of One of strife
Lifted to the throne of life."¹⁴

Hegel and Bradley have derived their moral theories of tragedy chiefly from the plays of Aeschylus. The popular notion of poetic justice also originated from the faith that seeming accident or misfortune in life, as in tragedy, is a necessary atonement required by the presiding Deity of the universe for the good of each of all. The doctrine of hamartia also is the expression of the same faith in the criticism of tragedy. So is the law of *Karma*.

But it must be remembered that this faith is never absolute. Unshakeable faith under all circumstances in the goodness of Divinity and the moral order of the universe might make for religion but cannot create tragedy. Doubt is as necessary as faith. It might be even more necessary in view of the tragic conflict of a soul divided against itself—the conflict, which is the essence of tragedy—though balance might tilt in favour of faith in the ultimate effect of the drama upon the spectators. Albert Camus rightly observes;

“If the divine order cannot be called into question and admits only sin and repentance, there is no tragedy. There can be only mysteries or parables, or again what the Spaniards call acts of faith or sacramental acts, that is to say spectacles in which the one truth that exists is solemnly proclaimed. It is thus possible to have religious drama but not religious tragedy. This explains the silence of tragedy upto Renaissance...Perhaps there has been only one Christian tragedy in history. It was celebrated on Golgotha during one imperceptible instant, at the moment of the 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?' This fleeting doubt, this doubt alone, made sacred the ambiguity of a tragic situation. Afterwards the divinity of Christ was never again called in doubt.”¹⁵

THE TRAGIC VIEW OF MAN :

The important questions that are usually suggested in a tragedy are; what is man ? Is he a mere puppet in the hands of destiny or a being endowed with the freedom of will and action ? Is he a prisoner of his personality unable to think and act against the conditioning he has received from early childhood upwards as some modern psycho-analysts aver, or a free maker of his personality ?

The tragic view holds that man indubitably has a small, sure degree of freedom although his conduct is largely determined, by the antecedents, and a supernatural power might be controlling the events of human life. Sophocles' chorus sings in OEDIPUS THE KING;

"Wonders are many on earth, and the greatest of these
Is man, who rides the ocean and takes his way
Though the deeds, through wind-swept valleys of perilous seas
That surge and sway.
He is master of ageless Earth, to his own will bending
The immortal mother of gods by the sweat of his brow,
As year succeeds to year, with toil unending
Of mule and plough.
He is lord of all things living; birds of the air,
Beasts of the field, all creatures of sea and land
He taketh, cunning to capture and ensnare
With sleight of hand;
Hunting the savage beast from the upland rocks,
Taming the mountain monarch in his lair,
Teaching the wild horse and the roaming ox
His yoke to bear.
The use of language, the wind-swift motion of brain
He learnt; found out the laws of living together
In cities, building him shelter against the rain
And wintry weather.

There is nothing beyond his power. His subtlety
Meeteth all chance, all danger conquereth.
For every ill he hath found its remedy,
Save only death."¹⁶

Shakespeare's Hamlet also says;

“What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason
How infinite in faculties, in form and moving,
How express and admirable, in action, how like an
Angel; in apprehension, how like a god. The
Beauty of the world. The paragon of animals.
And yet, to me, what is this quentessence of dust? Man delights not me
- no, nor woman neither, though by
Your smiling you seem to say so.”¹⁷

A.C. Swinbune writes of his tragic vision of man awakened to the transient nature of his being subject to death, governed by chance, and torn with ungratified desires;

“His speech is burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves and is clothed with derison;
Sows and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.”¹⁸

Tragedy regards man as a wonder of wonders, a phenomenon of phenomena, a master of the earth and yet a slave of death, a seeker after lasting happiness, and meeting in death a lasting sleep in conclusion of a story of hope. This view may be naive and unscientific. But it has emotional force and appeal. Man's freedom may be illusory or real. But it is our direct experience and hence it is undeniable and irrefutable. It is necessary in

tragedy because tragic action is responsible moral action. Character is more or less destiny in it. Mc Collom writes :

“Tragedy is a monument to the freedom of human choice.”¹⁹

(p.26-27)

CHARACTERS IN TRAGEDY :

Tragedy has to excite the emotions of pity and fear. To see a virtuous man coming to grief is shocking to our moral sense. It is outrageous but not tragic. Hence, the tragic hero should not be a thoroughly virtuous man. The tragic hero should be 'rather good'. That is, he should be largely good, but not altogether so. We pity such a man and fear on his account. The principle of poetic justice, however, is not violated here because the hero is not quite blameless. He has deserved some punishment, though often it appears that the punishment meted out to him is out of proportion. We have the feeling that the hero could have saved himself if he had been a little wiser. His error could have been rectified if he had acted rightly in time. His suffering was not inevitable. It was within his power to avoid it although he did not avoid it. Most often the tragic hero realizes that his own character was his destiny, that his doom was of his own making. The realization usually comes when it is too late to mend the matters. But it reconciles him with the world, and makes the spectators feel that they can rectify in themselves the possible errors and frailties similar to those that claimed the life of the hero. Raymond Williams rightly observes :

“The rhythm of tragedy, it is said, is a rhythm of sacrifice. A man is disintegrated by suffering, and is led to his death, but the action is more than personal and others are made whole as he is broken.”²⁰

Finally, we have to consider Aristotle's statement that the tragic hero should be a renowned and royal personage. This is true at least of classical tragedies, Elizabethan tragedies and epics. Mc Collom observes :

“The chief reason the hero must be generally superior to most men is that otherwise he cannot awaken that intense concern for man's plight which is certainly essential to tragedy. Although the hero no longer needs to be of high social rank, he must speak to us of the actions in which we surpass ourselves, of the moments in which we attain some barely probable kind of excellence. He must sustain our belief that our finest moments are real and no illusion. In our time this function may be accomplished by one of humble social position as easily as by a king or a general.”²¹

But it must be understood clearly that the tragic hero, though superior to an average man, is not different from him. He has to share the universal human nature with the rest of mankind in addition to his particular greatness and excellence. He should never cease to be one of us. Clifford Leech writes :

“The tragic hero - as Conrad said of Lord Jim in the preface to the novel where Jim was focus of regard - is 'one of us'. He is not necessarily virtuous, not necessarily free from profound guilt. What he is, is a man who reminds us strongly of our own humanity, who can be accepted as standing for us.”²²

What is the nature and place of a villain in tragedy ? The brief answer is: there is none. We may answer a little elaborately in the words of Albert Camus :

"..... The forces confronting each other in tragedy are equally legitimate, equally justified. In melodramas or dramas, on the contrary, only one force is legitimate. In other words, tragedy is ambiguous and drama simple-minded. In the former, each force is at one and the same time both good and bad. In the latter, one is good and the other bad (Which is why, in our day and age, propaganda plays are nothing but the resurrection of melodrama) Antigone is right, but Creon is not

wrong. Similarly, Prometheus is both just and unjust, and Zeus, who pitilessly oppresses him, also has right on his side. Melodrama could thus be summed up by saying: "Only one is just and justifiable, while the perfect tragic formula would be : 'All can be justified, no one is just.'"²³

In short, just as the best of men in tragedy has his hamartia or weak point, so also the worst of them has a redeeming silver fringe. But none is a villain and none a flawlessly virtuous man.

FATE OR DESTINY :

In all ages the tragedians have brooded over the problem of Fate and free-will in their own ways, though they have not always subscribed to some kind of fatalism or the other. The Greeks believed that the gods are hostile to human happiness. They cannot tolerate the success or prosperity of man. So they make for his downfall and doom. But in order to make their working look natural and moral they first of all make him take wrong decision and commit an error of judgment. This process of compelling wrong decision is called Ate. The Ate justifies Fate though both are equally ordained by gods. It maintains the delusion of free-will which is necessary for tragic action. It is illogical that while gods ordain all, man is still responsible for his action. Greek tragedy is thus illogical. The logical consistency would have only made tragedy impossible. D.W. Lucas observes;

“while all that happens is the will of heaven and is recognized as such by those concerned after it has happened, there is no fatalism in the behaviour of Greek heroes before the event. Hector fights nonetheless vigorously in the Iliad because he knows that Troy will one day fall, and the same knowledge never suggests to the Greeks that they should sit still and let the destined victory fall into their laps. Similarly in tragedy, whether a man believes in the supremacy of Zeus, or of Fate, or of blind Chance, his belief does nothing to sap his energies or to weaken his conviction that his decisions count.”²⁴

Shakespeare did not believe in absolute determinism. Yet he too recognized that there is only a modicum of freedom in man, and that the forces that frustrate and foil the human endeavour based upon it are almost insuperable. That is why Hamlet feels :

“There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”²⁵

But Shakespeare's own faith is not fatalism but freedom, however small and limited it may be. It is best expressed in the words of Cassius in *Julius Caesar* :

“Men at sometime are masters of their fates :
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underling.”²⁶

It is this faith that inspires Shakespeare's characters to act and confront one another in the tragic strife, and makes his tragedies so profoundly moving. Fate, he seems to be thinking, is powerful; but the free-will of man is not impotent. It should be remembered incidentally that Fate in Shakespearean tragedy is largely secularized. It may mean invisible power. But it means particularly the circumstances, chance, accident etc.

Fate in its traditional sense has disappeared from Ibsen. But the false hypocritical society stifling blindly but actively the elementary urges of its poor individual members, is not less fatal than Fate. The notion that the sins of the parents are visited upon the children is not less painful. Established ideas, orders, ideals, customs and customary ways of thinking together with inescapable heredity, are the insurmountable walls beyond which a soul being stifled within them cannot hope to go. They are intangible but oppressive ghosts, which you cannot fight and subdue. Often one may feel that one is ghost among ghosts, helpless & powerless, not a man capable of driving them away. Ibsen's Mrs. Alving says in *Ghosts*.

“I am half inclined to think we are all ghosts, Mr. Manders. It is not only what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers that exists

again in us, but all sorts of old dead ideas and all kinds of old beliefs and things of that kind. They are not actually alive in us; but they are dormant, all the same, and we can never be rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper and read it, I fancy, I see ghosts creeping between the lines. There must be ghosts all over the world. They must be as countless as the grains of the sands, it seems to me. And we are so miserably afraid of the light, all of us.”²⁷

Yet Ibsen does not despair. His heroes and heroines do not abdicate their responsibility. They do not submit to, but revolt against the combined forces of the ghosts, heredity and the hypocritical society. They are free enough to fight at least if not to win as well, and they continue to fight even when deserted by their fellow men in general. They are like Dr. Stockmann in *AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE* who discovers at the end of the drama that 'the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone.' The heroism of man lies in ceaseless struggle against untruths and injustice.

Some form of Fate frustrating Man's aspirations for the happiness of choice, is a basic requirement in tragedy. So is a degree of freedom in man that can confront at least if not conquer the power of Fate. We discover the conflict between Fate and free-will in all tragedies worth the name.

THE TRAGIC DELIGHT :

The complex tragic emotion according to George Santayana 'must contain an element of pain overbalanced by an element of pleasure.'²⁸

What pleases in tragedy is not the spectacle of pain but the presence of the elements of pleasure. Santayana observes :

“There is, in reality, no such paradox in the tragic, comic, and the sublime, as has been sometimes supposed. We are not pleased by virtue of the suggested evils, but in spite of them; and if ever the charm of the beautiful presentation sinks so low, or the vividness of the represented

evil rises so high, that the balance is in favour of pain, at that very moment the whole object becomes horrible, passes out of the domain of art, and can be justified only by its scientific or moral uses. As an aesthetic value it is destroyed; it ceases to be a benefit; and the author of it, if he were not made harmless by the neglect that must soon overtake him, would have to be punished as a malefactor who adds to the burden of life.”²⁹

The tragic writer employs the charms of meter, rhyme, melody, figures of speech, poetry and lyricism, and all the other accessories, forms and sensuous elements in order to relieve the pathos and enlighten the gloom of tragedy. Santayana writes :

“To the value of these sensuous and formal elements must be added the continual suggestion of beautiful and happy things, which no tragedy is somber enough to exclude. Even if we do not go so far as to intersperse comic scenes and phrases into a pathetic subject, — a rude device, since the comic passages themselves need that purifying which they are meant to effect—we must at last relieve our theme with pleasing associations. For this reason we have palaces for our scene, rank, beauty and virtue in our heroes, nobility in their passions and in their fate, and altogether a sort of glorification of life without tragedy would lose both in depth of pathos - since things so precious are destroyed - and in subtlety of charm, since things so precious are manifested.”³⁰

Thus the tragic delight comes not from the real suffering, but from imaginary one, not our own, but of someone else to whom we are attached in the fiction, narrated or stage-performed. The tears we shed are the tears, not of sorrow, but of sympathy for the hero's misfortune with unconscious consolation that after all it is feigned, not true. The tragic emotion is the compound of admiration and pity—admiration for the hero's greatness, and pity for his weakness. We feel for him and fear on his account. All this changes for a while languid and listless state of mind into an excitement which pleases. There are in addition pleasurable accessories and continual suggestions of happy things as described by George

Santayana quoted earlier. The total effect of tragedy, consequently, is one of sublimity and beauty, which soften sorrow and transmute it into tearful delight. We love this delight more than the laughter of comedy, more than any other sort of entertainment served by various other literary genres.



II

Sri Aurobindo writes about Valmiki and Vyasa, the authors of **The Ramayana** and **The Mahabharata** that they wrote with a sense of their function as architects and sculptors of life, creative exponents, fashioners of significant forms of national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society a certain strain of philosophic ideas runs through these poems and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception of living presentation². **The Ramayana** has always attracted the attention not only of the Indian critics but also of the Western critics. It is regarded as “the most controversial and criticized epic”³. It has the grace and a unique vitality on account of which it has become an inextricable part of the collective psyche of India. It exhibits in addition the features of tragedy and epic Aristotle talks about except, artistically required size. **The Ramayana**, the first work of Sanskrit literature, is the best example of tragedy. Yet it is surprising that tragedy as a drama has not developed in the history of classical Sanskrit literature. Bhasa’s **Urubhangam** and **Karnabharam** and Bhavbhuti’s **Uttat Ramcharitam** appear to be exceptions. But even here the pattern of action which begins with the hero’s error of judgement or some expression of his weakness and concludes with consequent suffering and death does not appear clearly. Often the flaw is observed in the society they live in, and they look like the victims of erroneous social attitudes. I have attempted a study of some of the characters. It is all the more surprising that texts similar to Aristotle’s **Poetics** theorizing about the nature, structure and function of tragedy, have not followed this epic. There is more in it to justify the formulations of Aristotle and Bradley than there is in the Western Epics. Yet somehow the theoretical task has never been attempted. The Sanskrit Poetics are

Confined to the analysis of the dominant emotion (Rasa) and indirect suggestion (Dwani). Our critical grasp of life and of the life reflected in literature has been traditionally very weak. Matthew Arnold describes literature as 'criticism of life'. But classical Sanskrit literature by and large does not appear to be a criticism of contemporary socio-political reality. Only the ancient epics, **The Ramayana** and **The Mahabharata**, written centuries before the beginning of the classical period, are truly the criticism of life. It is a massive recordation ensuring the nation's hoary and still living tradition that is the nectarine clue connecting the present with the past and the future⁴.

Aristotle's statement that epic poetry has a great, a special capacity for enlarging its dimensions, is seen concretized in **The Ramayana**, where Valmiki has effectively comprehended almost all the aspects of life. That way it is difficult to find a parallel of it in the literature of the Western world.

Homer, in **Iliad**, covers only a part of the war of Troy which lasted for ten years. He aimed at thematic unity, artistically acceptable magnitude and beauty of form free from superfluities. Milton, the great English Epic poet, narrates the aim behind writing his epical poem, **The Paradise Lost** as "To Justify God's ways to Man". While Valmiki, unlike Homer and Milton, aims at cosmic majesty of God pervading and transcending our universe: Obviously it includes our terrestrial stream with its petty socio-political and psychological conflicts and "comprehensive essence" of a culture at the apex of its progress i.e. 'The eternal tragedy of Man _ the pain of separation from the dearer and the nearer ones.'

मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठाम्त्व | मगमः शाश्वतीः समाः |

यत् क्रौञ्च मिथुनात् एक | मवधीः काम मोहितम् || १-२-१५

"Oh! Ill-fated Hunter, by which reason you have killed one male bird of the couple, when it is in its lustful passion, thereby you will get an ever-lasting reputation for ages to come..."

In Milton, on the other hand, is seen Goodness and God-fearing rectitude as an ideal. Adam and Eve suffer because they fall short of the ideal. Yet what we discover in Milton is dogmatic Christianity, not universally acceptable wisdom. **The Ramayana** is a mine of universally acceptable ethical and spiritual wisdom. It presents a picture-gallery of truly great moral heroes. **The Ramayana** is a work of a morally and spiritually mature culture. There is nothing comparable to it in the Western epics. Through the character of Rama,

Valmiki, the seer poet, follows a sublime Heroic ideal of a sound, peaceful and harmonious social order. Spread into 7 Chapters and 24,000 slokas, Rama, the hero of the epic is _

बुद्धिमान् नीतिमान् वाङ्मयी श्रीमान् शत्रु निबर्हणः ।

विपुलांसो महाबाहुः कंबु ग्रीवो महाहनुः ॥ १-१-९

धर्मज्ञः सत्य सन्धः च प्रजानाम् च हिते रतः ।

यशस्वी ज्ञान संपन्नः शुचिः वश्यः समाधिमान् ॥ १-१-१२

"He is an adept one, moralist, learned, propitious, and a destroyer of enemies. His arms are lengthy, and his neck is like a conch-shell, and cheekbones high... [1-1-9]

"He is the knower of rectitude, bidden by the truth, also his concern is in the welfare of subjects, proficient in prudence, clean in his conduct, self-controlled and a diligent one, thus he is glorious... [1-1-12]

Yet with possible human natural flaws, struggles hard to be loyal to his conscience, tries to establish Truth as god in life, fulfills all his worldly duties at his best; makes him an Ideal hero who suffers like a common man and yet at times, rises to divine status.

स तु मेधाविनौ दृष्ट्वा वेदेषु परिनिष्ठितौ ।

वेदोपबृंहणार्थाय तौ अग्राहयत प्रभुः ॥ १-४-६

"On seeing that pair intellectuals who are proficient in Veda-s that self-reliant sage Valmiki made those two to memorize the epic, as the epic Ramayana is composed only to reinforce the import of Veda-s, as an ancillary." [1-4-6]

एवम् पितामहात् तस्मात् वरदानेन गर्वितः ॥ १-१६-६

उत्सादयति लोकान् त्रीन् स्त्रियः च अपि अपकर्षति ।

तस्मात् तस्य वधो दृष्टो मानुषेभ्यः परन्तप ॥ १-१६-७

इति एतत् वचनम् श्रुत्वा सुराणाम् विष्णुः आत्मवान् ।

पितरम् रोचयामास तदा दशरथम् नृपम् ॥ १-१६-८

"Thus, on getting boon from the Forefather Brahma he has become arrogant and torturing the three worlds, and he is even abducting women. As such, oh, enemy destroyer Vishnu, his elimination is envisaged through humans alone." So said gods to Vishnu. [1-16-6b, 7]

"On hearing that speech of gods said that way, he that kind-hearted Vishnu then chose Dasharatha as his father in human world. [1-16-8]"

Thus, within the human limitations of mind, body and soul, Rama, though incarnation of God Vishnu, he never tries to surpasses human boundaries, becomes pray to human folly, human pain and yet rises to perfection. Thus, the Ancient Indian epic, *The Ramayana* is written “To justify Man’s ways to God”.

The origin of the research problem lies in the argument that tragedy is the form of literature invented by the West, particularly by the Greek Tragedians- Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. And they have taken the stories of their plays mostly from the epics of Homer etc. But while reading the great epic of India, Vyas’ **The Mahabharata**, as a subject of his Doctoral research, the researcher found that most of the characters of the epic work on different patterns of tragedy. During the span of nearly two thousand years these patterns of tragedy were developed in the West.

Thus, what was observed by the Western poets during two thousand years was seen more minutely, universally and in its entirety, some three-four thousand years ago by the great seer-poets of India, Valmiki and Vyas in their epics, **The Ramayana** and **The Mahabharata**. But unfortunately, after the great destructive war of Kurukshetra, there was a total darkness in the history of India. We know not what happened during those five hundred years in the field of literature. And when we wake up once again, we meet with the Buddhist India, the later phase of the ancient Indian culture, obsessed with the evils of birth, death, disease, old age and transience of the world. Against the profound affirmation of life in the **The Ramayana** and **The Mahabharata**, the negative approach towards life during these new times could produce no tragedy. Thus to bring out the true nature of the great Indian epics, which are not only great religious treatises, but they are a true criticism of life and of human nature with such a depth and subtlety that it was, is and would never be seen in any work of art in the world literature, is the aim of the researcher.

The research aims at giving new dimension to the thinking pattern of the East as well as the West. Until now, **The Ramayana** is treated only as a mythological religious tale of the incarnations of Gods and Goddesses, where human action becomes negligible. All is taken as the predestined drama of Fate by the Indian mind. Even the characters are observed by the Indian reader in plain black and white light. Thus, the whole work is treated as a Utopia. But Shakespeare says in **Julius Caesar**:

“Men at sometime are masters of their fates:

The fault, dear Brutus, is not our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlying.”⁶

Valmiki is treated only as a seer not as a poet who has tried to reflect life of his times not only as it is, but as it should be or ought to be. Thus, the poet in Valmiki has suffered because of the religious blindness of the Indian reader who is not ready to see the characters of this great epic as human beings with all its limitations what Aristotle calls *Hamartia*. The objective reading of the epic clearly supports the doctrine of character is destiny. And one finds the words of a prominent critic Mc Collom, applicable to **The Ramayana** that Tragedy is a monument to the freedom of human choice⁷.

Thus, this research would provide a new insight into the reading of the oldest work of Sanskrit literature. At the same time, it would give a comparative study of this Indian work with the Western concepts of poetics with its theories of Catharsis of the feelings of pity and fear, epic; of which Aristotle says that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single meter, the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, middle and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be⁸. And the tragic rhythm is also studied with the focus of some of the main stream characters of **The Ramayana**.

The Research will bring out the precious contribution of the great Indian poet Valmiki to the world literature. It will also question the age old beliefs of the Western literary world about the invention and development of the most important literary terms like epic, tragedy and the very concept of literature. The work will open a new area of research, whereby ancient Indian literature as well as Sanskrit literature can be studied with a Western perspective. This comparative study will provide a healthy approach to both the streams of thought, The East and The West. As the researcher’s intension is not to look down upon any culture but to present a truth to the literary world which was remained in darkness from ages.

For the Indian mind, this research would turn out to be a challenge. It has attacked the very faith of Indian reader i.e. the responsibility of the sufferings of the divine characters of **The**

Ramayana falls unto some extent upon them. Nobody is the maker or destroyer except one's own **Self**. The aim of this research is to provide a rational as well as an objective attitude towards life, something that the Indians, in general, have lacked for centuries. As a result, the critical faculty in Indian thought has been missing. Thus, this research is an attempt to realise the objective as well as critical attitude towards life that was there in the great works of Valmiki and Vyas centuries ago.

The Indian Epic of Valmiki, **The Ramayana** is larger and higher than what Aristotle meant by the concept of epic in the West. And as Aristotle said that epic and tragedy differentiates in the narrative technique only otherwise the pattern of action in both is the same i.e. tragic. This too is largely found in **The Ramayana**.

-----X-----

Appendix C

National as well as International Status of the Research Project:

For the Indian mind, this research would turn out to be a challenge. It has attacked the very faith of Indian reader i.e. the responsibility of the sufferings of the divine characters of **The Ramayana** falls unto some extent upon them. Nobody is the maker or destroyer except one's own **Self**. The aim of this research is to provide a rational as well as an objective attitude towards life, something that the Indians, in general, have lacked for centuries. As a result, the critical faculty in Indian thought has been missing. Thus, this research is an attempt to realise the objective as well as critical attitude towards life that was there in the great works of Valmiki and Vyas centuries ago.

The Research will bring out the precious contribution of the great Indian poet Valmiki to the world literature. It will also question the age old beliefs of the Western literary world about the invention and development of the most important literary terms like epic, tragedy and the very concept of literature. The work will open a new area of research, whereby ancient Indian literature as well as Sanskrit literature can be studied with a Western perspective. This comparative study will provide a healthy approach to both the streams of thought, The East and The West. As the researcher's intension is not to look down upon any culture but to present a truth to the literary world which was remained in darkness from ages.