



Sons of Gods -- Mahabharata

Sharon Maas

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A novel version of the great Indian epic. The Mahabharata belongs in the annals of world literature, and every educated person should be familiar with it. Its message is timeless (without it being a "message" book), and especially relevant in these turbulent times. Western readers in particular should be reading the Mahabharata, including non-resident Indians who may have lost touch with their roots.

SONS OF GODS -- MAHABHARATA is kaleidoscopic in its beauty and intricacy. The hurdle of the tale's massive scope has always daunted translators, and the difficulty of prising the right tone from an ancient grand epic to suit a modern and Western audience has relegated it to largely academic obscurity.??What's saved it for us is that Sharon Maas knows full well that love, betrayal, lust, envy, pride, devotion, and heroism never go out of style. SONS OF GODS is a literary soap opera with a soul that spans the full horizon.

"The highest literature transcends regionalism, and through it, when we are properly attuned, we realise the essential oneness of the human family.

"The Mahabharata is of this class. It belongs to the world and not only to India. To the people of India, indeed, this epic has been an unfailing and perennial source of spiritual strength. Learnt at the mother's knee with reverence and love, it has inspired great men to heroic deeds as well as enabled the humble to face their trials with fortitude and faith."

From: Preface to the Second Edition of The Mahabharata, by C. Rajagopalachari; Madras 1952

Sons of Gods -- Mahabharata Details

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From Reader Review Sons of Gods -- Mahabharata for online ebook

Jamie Mason says

I've always loved mythologies. Like most of my American contemporaries, Greek and Roman myths were part of our school curriculum. On my own, I sought out Native American and Norse tales. As I let them, they spilled the secrets of the forces and spirits that put color and flourish over the grey cogs of physics and rationalism. I've loved these stories for the freedom from the strictly literal that they offer; the chance to swim in what it says of humanity in the stories we invent to explain the universe.

I had certainly heard of India's rich fables and parables, particularly, the Bhagavad Gita. But I didn't know of its larger contextual epic, The Mahabharata. And I also didn't know that I was poorer for it.

I had read Sharon Maas (writing here as Aruna Sharan) several years ago. Her gorgeous and riveting, *OF MARRIAGEABLE AGE*, is a treasure to me as it is currently (but perhaps not for long) out of print. I was delighted for the opportunity to read a new work of hers.

SONS OF GODS: THE MAHABHARATA RETOLD is kaleidoscopic in its beauty and intricacy. The hurdle of the tale's massive scope has always daunted translators, and the difficulty of prising the right tone from an ancient grand epic to suit a modern and Western audience has relegated it to largely academic obscurity.

What's saved it for us is that Aruna Sharan knows full well that love, betrayal, lust, envy, pride, devotion, and heroism never go out of style. *SONS OF GODS* is a literary soap opera with a soul that spans the full horizon.

Love for the panoramic story itself and the patience of more than three decades of careful crafting has solved the literary puzzle of how to present it for an audience in the digital age. Aruna Sharan is well-suited in both talent and passion to deliver a new classic for lovers of mythology.

The unique category of mythology also makes *SONS OF GODS* a clever fit for Amazon's Kindle publishing as proving ground for its appeal. The price is incredible for a work of such excellence. Still, I hope for the day to hold it hardbound in my hands, as well. This isn't just a book, it's the Universe explained.

Ajay Taneja says

Absolutely fantastic

Arunita says

First of all thanks a lot to the author for offering a soft version of this book while I was going to wait forever for the hard copy to release. Despite not being a die hard Karna Fan I have to say this is a Karna centred (as mentioned by author herself) book which does not twist and turn facts to suit the glorification of its central

character. It is a very short retelling I would say (18 days war description only can cover a single book) but the way of narrating the story is good and entertaining. Overall a very nice read (specially if you have no prior knowledge of the epic which unfortunately I did have a little bit) but being very short and simple version many complex characters of the epic did not get enough space to be portrayed properly in my opinion.

Melitza says

I loved the book. The description of the people and the objects were wonderful. I love the hidden messages.

Andrew says

This retelling of the Mahabharata has been my introduction to the Hindu classic. I found it interesting, but a book I will need to reread again in the future.

Shelley Schanfield says

There are many retellings of the Mahabharata, India's classic epic. I have read several and would recommend Sons of Gods for anyone not already familiar with this ancient tale.

Taken as a whole, the Mahabharata is unwieldy, to say the least. It is filled with digressions and stories within stories that resist linear narrative. Sharon Maas's version is admirably streamlined for readers who want to get a grounding in the basic story before exploring in more detail the rambling conglomeration of myths, legends, and history that make up this massive tale.

The greatest strength of Sons of Gods lies in its introduction to the complex Kuru-Pandava lineage. Understanding the complicated issues around the succession is key to understanding the tragic war between the two princely lines. Maas lays out the whole convoluted tale, from the grandfather Santanu to the grandsons Dhritarashtra and Pandu. Dhritarashtra, who is born blind, cannot rule. Pandu, the younger one, will inherit.

The princess Kunti serves the great sage Durvasa and because of her piety receives a boon from him. He teaches her a mantra that enables her to summon any god, and though she is warned not to use it lightly, she can't resist trying it. She summons the sun god Surya, and by him she bears a son. Her honor is at stake, however. Not daring to reveal she has borne a child she sets her little son afloat in a basket. Unlike Moses, who is rescued by a royal princess, a charioteer's wife finds Kunti's son. She and her husband, ignorant of his illustrious lineage, raise Karna as their own child.

In due course, Kunti marries Pandu. Because of a curse (read the book if you want to know more!) Pandu is unable to father children on his wives Kunti and Madri. To ensure her husband's line, Kunti uses her mantra to summon the gods Dharma, Vayu, and Indra, who father sons on her. She allows Pandu's other wife to use the mantra to summon the Ashvins, twin gods who father Madri's twins. These sons of gods, who by ancient law of levirate become Pandu's heirs (the Pandavas), grow to manhood ignorant of their half-brother Karna just as he is ignorant of his lineage.

Maas's version goes straight and true from the early conflicts between the young Kuru and Pandava princes, who are raised in the same royal household, to the martial contest where an unknown charioteer's son Karna challenges the haughty Pandava prince Arjuna and becomes an ally of the Kurus, through the infamous game of dice to the Pandavas' thirteen year exile to the final war. I read avidly; didn't put it down, even though the ending was no mystery to me. It hits the most important events and illustrates the moral conflicts, but necessarily leaves out a great deal. Also, Maas's prose is lovely and descriptive, and it reflects the fact that the Mahabharata is a religious text as well as a ripping tale. For me, this sometimes renders the characters two-dimensional.

For a lengthier version, I highly recommend the poet Carole Satyamurti's *Mahabharata: A Modern Retelling*. It includes more of the digressions and backstory from the 75,000+ verses that make up the whole. (Note: it includes a useful guide to pronunciation of the impossible names.)

For lively retelling, wonderfully illustrated by the author and including discussions of themes, history, and philosophy after each chapter, see Devdutt Pattanaik's *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata*.

For an interesting (if not as well-written) take on the epic, see Neelakantan's *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice*. This version makes Dhritarashtra's son Duryodhana, the Kuru prince whose envy and lust for power bring about the war, into the misunderstood hero, and the Pandava princes into hypocritical prigs.

For a feminine point of view, *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Divakaruni tells the story of Draupadi, the wife the five Pandava brothers share. In Divakaruni's version, she's in love with Karna.
