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Título: Mahabharata, The. Vol. 2. Book 1: The Book Of The Assembly Hall. Book3: The Book

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Precio: \$850.00

Editorial:

Año: 1981

Tema:

Edición: 1ª

Sinopsis

ISBN: 9780226846644

The Mahabharata, an ancient and vast Sanskrit poem, is a remarkable collection of epics, legends, romances, theology, and ethical and metaphysical doctrine. The core of this great work is the epic struggle between five heroic brothers, the Pandavas, and their one hundred contentious cousins for rule of the land. This is the second volume of van Buitenen's acclaimed translation of the definitive Poona edition of the text. Book two, The Book of the Assembly Hall, is an epic dramatization of the Vedic ritual of consecration that is central to the book. Book three, The Book of the Forest, traces the further episodes of the heroes during their years in exile. Also included are the famous story of Nala, dealing with the theme of love in separation, and the story of Rama, the subject of the other great Sanskrit epic, the Ramayana, as well as other colorful tales.