

## **An Insight into the Tenets of Epic: A Theoretical Outlook**

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### **Abstract**

Epic is an extensive narrative poem expressed in a grand style widely known as Myth. Almost people from all the region have their own Epics. They are either in oral form or in script form but almost every region has one. Epics are framed in such a way that either that would be in a song format or poetry format. The ultimate goal is to convey a complete tale to the audience. Be it *Mahabharata* of east or *Iliad* of west, foretelling or soothsaying is the essence of both. The core goal is to give an idea of what is going to happen in the upcoming events. Likewise, there are certain qualities that an epic has. This paper contributes to explain some basic and main belief or a principle of an epic. The selected epics for the paper are, *The Mahabharata* and *The Iliad*.

**Keywords:** Epic, Foretelling, Enlistment, Supernatural power, Hero Worshipping, War and Destruction.

### **Introduction**

*Iliad* is a work of Homer. It has many names and often referred as 'The Song of Ilion' and 'Song of Ilium. Herotodus locates Homer at circa 850BC. Homer's *Iliad* is from a period known as "The Archaic Period of Classical Antiquity". Homer's another great work is *Odyssey* recites the incidents which happen after Trojan War. *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the greatest epics and a base to pedagogy itself. The epic is about the battle between the Trojans and the Greeks. Even though the story covers only the last few weeks of the war scene it manages to unfold most of the stories within. Mahabharata is one of the greatest ancient Sanskrit epics of India, by sage Veda Vyasa. The epic was written during 'Vedic Times'. It is the longest epic poem in India. This epic is about a war between the Kuravas and the Pandavas. Both the epics were originally framed in oral form. Joseph Farrel says about homer, "... the great creator, especially of poetic language and as the Blind seer wanders held no great honour whose sufferings has gained him an acute understanding of the nature..." (273) he eulogizes Homer for producing an amazing work.

Both the epics have a grand style and also have their own qualities. But as for epics there are some common and predictable qualities present like a rule. Walcott Omeros marks in his work that,

“Epic makes people think of great wars and great warriors.” So, people have a perception that Epic means war and warrior it is what called tenets or a quality of an epic.

## Discussion

Every single Genre has a distinct quality. A crime novel must have a one murder plot or some sort of mystery. The plot related to crime or the mystery has to be solved. The writing style differs according to the author, some author uses light vocabularies and simple sentences whereas some uses grand style and traditional method. But certainly it will have a common quality. The paper focuses on the qualities of an epic how they reveal the plot, how the characters are described, what are the basic qualities of an epic. *Iliad* is all about battle between the Trojans and the Greeks for a woman's sake named Helen. In *Mahabharata*, the Pandavas and the Kauravas battle for the throne of Hastinapur but they were stimulated to battle for the humiliation caused to Draupathi. The Greek epic *Iliad* and the Indian epic *Mahabharata* does have many things in common. The concept of Hero worshipping is too strong that it imposes the stature of the epic. In *Iliad* when Achilles declines to fight on behalf of Greeks, they start losing the war. But when he returns, he single handedly takes the lives of hundreds and so many. Likewise, in *Mahabharata*, Arjuna single handedly fights with hundreds and many with his weapon Gandiva. This gives a majestic impression on them.

In both the epics, foretelling is the core technique to express or reveal the upcoming happenings. Achilles' death was foretold, Karna was cursed by Lord Parashurama for tricking him to teach a war technique called Brahma Hastra. The curse is that he would not remember the technique when he needed it the most. Another curse was by a Brahmana for accidentally killing a cow. The curse is that his car wheel would be swallowed by the earth itself and he would be beheaded by the one whom he strives to defeat in the battle field. Curse is the indication to Karna that he will die in a battlefield. These two incidents were expressed earlier in the epic even before the war scene. Achilles and Karna, they both has a peculiar commonness, that is their Armour. Karna was born with it whereas Achilles was gifted. The presence of Demi Gods are casual in Epics. Kunti's all six son's fathers are supernatural in *Mahabharata*. In *Iliad* either the mother will be a supernatural or the father. (Eg.) Dionysus is the son of Zeus, the God of Gods and Semele the mortal woman. Karna from *Mahabharata* is a son of Sun God and Princess Kunti. The characteristics of women and men are equally portrayed in a grand style. The interventions of God play a vital role in both. In *Iliad* Achilles and Agamemnon quarrels, the goddess of wisdom, Athena advises them not to fight among themselves and give victory to the enemies over them. In *Mahabharata* Lord Krishna plays a vital role in the victory of Pandavas in Kurushetra war. He plays the role of a wise advisor. In some or the other way the influence of God in Mortal's war is shown in both the epics.

## Conclusion

Hero's destiny decides the fate of his people and their destiny. When Heccuba gives birth to Paris, it's foretold that the child will bring destruction and endangered to the kingdom. By eloping with Helen, Paris brings destruction to his people. They lost the battle and the people were taken as slaves. In *Mahabharata*, Duriyodhana who is considered to be the bad one gives grief and discomfort to the people while ruling. Whereas Pandavas people are granted with freedom and comfort. People

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whose names are mentioned in the Epics are mostly from royal families or belonged to upper class family. (Eg.) Hector of Iliad; Helen of Sparta and Pandavas of Mahabharata; Princess Draupathi of Panchala. Karna was faithful to Duriyodhana because he once saved him from a bitter humiliation in the suyamvara of Draupathi. He remained faithful till last breath for the friendship he had with Duriyodhana, So did Achilles with Patrocles. Achilles was stubborn not to return to Agamemnon. But when his friend Patroclus was killed in the battle field by Hector, he went out and joined the battle. He fought till his last breath, just to take revenge for his friend's death.

War and warriors, rage and vengeance, role of supernatural elements and supernatural power, settings and destiny, class system and consciousness, journey and quest are the basic qualities that an epic has. Even though the epics have much commonness, they are still unique in their own way.

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