

Tragic nobility and the ethics of war: The interplay of fate, pride, and duty in the Iliad and Mahabharata

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Abstract: The current paper questions the idea of a noble tragedy and ethical aspects of war as presented in the writings of Homer in the Iliad and Vyasa in the Mahabharata as the two pillars of their respective societies that define the moral and philosophical paradigms of the time and place. Both works define war as not just a political or war of arms, but a test of character that determines how the hero is true to fate, pride, and to duty, and so forth. The study examines the presence of a comparative view of the characters Achilles, Hector, Arjuna, and Karna by investigating how the Greek understanding of the concept of virtues and excellence, namely, *areté*, and the Indian one, namely, dharma, convey the similar or different values of heroism. With a reference to the theory of tragedy provided by Aristotle, Indian dharma philosophy, and the virtue ethics by Alasdair MacIntyre, the paper assumes that both epics redefine heroism as moral consciousness limited by fate. The paths of acceptance of fatal destiny of Achilles and of realization of nishkama karma (selfless action) of Arjuna make the typical moral development of movement of retribution against wisdom to pride against humility. As opposed to Greek fatalism which anticipates the nobility of the struggle, the Indian spirituality underscores the moral transcendence by self-knowledge. In line with this, the study concludes that, in truth, nobility occurs as self-realization in ethical turbulence, and thus, transforms suffering into moral experiences. In Greek fatalism, the virtue of endurance is enhanced whereas moral transcendence through self-knowledge is on the spotlight in Indian spirituality. The paradigms offered by these epics are still very relevant in modern time when the world is like a battlefield of leadership, duty, and conscience. According to them, the greatest manifestation of heroism is not realized in success or power, but moral perseverance, human concern and self-control.

Keywords: Tragic Nobility; Heroism; Ethics of War; *Iliad*; *Mahabharata*; Fate; Pride; Duty; *Dharma*; *Arete*; Moral Philosophy; Virtue Ethics; Self-Realization; Moral Endurance; Comparative Literature

INTRODUCTION

The Iliad and the Mahabharata are grand epics which have greatly contributed to moral, philosophical and cultural awareness of Greece and India as such. Both stories, despite their historical roots, choose to act as moralistic reflections of civilization, and understand the human nature, using the war, duty, pride and god will as a thru-line to the human soul. Homer is not just the author of the Iliad; it is the self-proclaimed history of the Trojan War, but it is a deep reflection on what it means to be a hero when one dies, on the virtue of glory and the price it demands, on this cost (Bowra 42). Similarly, Mahabharata, which is attributed to be

the work of Vyasa, is a cosmic conversation on righteousness (dharma) and the moral vagueness of human action (Bhattacharya 17).

In both epics, war is a kind of a moral testing ground, a place when people have to resolve ethical and existential issues. The arena turns into the field where human desires are opposite to the will of gods. The first instance of the battle between ego and fate (moira) is also expressed in the wrath of Achilles in the Iliad when he struggles to take vengeance over Honour (hubris) through his wrath which ultimately results in his downfall (Kitto 85).

On the other hand, moral reluctance of Arjuna in the Kurukshetra war in the Mahabharata throws a light on the contradiction between personal conscience and social duty (svadharma) (Radhakrishnan 210). Both heroes have to come into conflict with the quest of glory and the burden of moral responsibility and it proves that heroism cannot be discussed outside of ethical struggle. Such epics must be approached comparatively as it points out the universality of the heroic paradox and brings forth the cultural models of ethics that are unique to one or another cultural group. On the one hand, the worldview of the Greek society imparts to people the principles of fate and the tragic necessity of misery where the nobility is in the courageous acceptance of one own demise (MacIntyre 74).

Conversely, the Indian worldview emphasizes upon karma and moral action by being under the belief that liberation is made through self-knowledge and non-attachment to duty (nishkama karma) (Iyengar 121). Comparing these stories, it is possible to evaluate the meeting of Greek fatalism and Indian dharma, which is the depiction of nobility as an ethical and spiritual challenge instead of heroism. This comparative prism draws emphasis on the point that even though the Iliad glorifies the magnificence of human confrontation, the Mahabharata internalizes it as a voy of self-realization- a difference that characterizes the ethical component of each school. The central paradox of both epics is still a noble paradox; a good hero is not only brought up by his own virtues, but also killed by them. Achilles, Hector, Arjuna and Karna are the representatives of the ideals of courage, honour and loyalty, but these virtuous qualities turn to be the cause of moral pain.

The quest of eternity in his glory alienates Achilles, rejecting him to compassion and society which leads to the terrible conclusion of his humaneness as he ends by killing Hector (Homer 22.395-404). It is the unbreakable feeling of duty that makes Hector face certain death, hence, turning him into an icon of tragic honour, as opposed to winning (Bowra 63). Similarly, the

state of compassion is in helplessness when Arjuna is on the verge of a battle confrontation and displays the ethical dilemma of emotional good versus good deed (Radhakrishnan 215). Fate and loyalty turned Karna, who, as a noble and ethical person, was at the mercy of social stigma and the rules of his own primal and noble blood, into an example of his own ethical nobility being ruined by destiny and devotion (Bhattacharya 49).

In both epics, the moral conflict is then developed between the duty (dharma/arete) and emotion, pride and destiny. According to the Greek moral universe, arete or the seeking of what is excellent requires the hero is doing in harmony with his character even when it comes at the expense of self-destruction (Kitto 98). Moral clarity and freedom of attachment to own desire are inherited in the Indian context of dharma; doing the right thing is to go beyond ego and emotion (Iyengar 127). But both codes of ethics are faced with the same question of existence: can a hero stay a noble man or woman when the duty requires him to kill and when fortune is against man? This study thus aims at demystifying the action between pride, duty, and fate which turns heroism into tragedy where nobility is not only a characteristic of power but also a curse of conscience. As the research illustrates this development of ethics, it highlights the universality of tragic ethics which is, ethical suffering is not the defeat but the awareness of it (MacIntyre 102).

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the representation of fate, pride, and duty as determinants of tragic heroism.
2. To compare the moral frameworks of Greek and Indian epic traditions.
3. To interpret nobility as a moral and psychological construct rather than merely a heroic attribute.
4. To explore how ethical consciousness transforms the warrior into a tragic figure.

Scope and Limitations

The current question limits its textual analysis to those ones of the epics which shed light best on the ethical conflict between fate, pride and duty. This paper is an analysis of Books I, IX, XXII, and XXIV of the Iliad of Homer as a complete storytelling of how Achilles arrives at an emotional and ethical level in his life. Book I presents the wrath (mēnis) of Achilles and his break with Agamemnon, and, as such, unveils the hints of hubris and aggrieved honour

(Homer 1.112). The parable using books IX includes the scene of the gift of Achilles where Odysseus and Phoenix plead with his sense of civic duty, which further enhances the division between the pride of individuals and the duty after the nation (Bowra 58).

Book IX gives the final face-to-face battle of the two heroes Achilles and Hector- the face-to-face battle of fury and duty (Kitto 92). Lastly, Book XXIV is an appearance of Achilles and Priam during which pity and acknowledgment help Achilles to alter his tragic pride into moral wisdom (Homer 24.5075551). Collectedly these four books outline the moral circle of Homeric heroism, which develops into revengeful solitude and understanding humanity. The Mahabharata deals with three major parts, the Bhagavad Gita, Shanti Parva, and the Karna Parva. The philosophical base of seeing dharma and moral crisis of action is in Bhagavad Gita (Books VI.2340), in which the stagnation of Arjuna on the battlefield is the ultimate illustration of the battle between emotional virtue and righteous duty (Radhakrishnan 213).

The Shanti Parva provides post-war insights into peace, repentance, and the definition of the ethical government, hence depicting how the heroic glory is turned into ethical enlightenment (Bhattacharya 54). Instead, the Karna Parva explores the tragic mobility of Karna, his sense of loyalty, pride and fatalism, as to be found in Achilles himself, who also faces the problem of honour and fate (Iyengar 129). The researchers in this study can then be termed as literary and philosophical, but not historical. It does not seek to determine necessarily the chronological date of authorship or socio-political names of the epics. Rather, it reads both texts as ethical stories and moral allegories, paying attention to the part of the literary form that entails philosophical reflection. Comparative literary criticism and ethical philosophy is the method used in the study to reveal similar and different responses in heroic ideals, as opposed to following an archaeological or linguistic development.

The weaknesses of this method are that it intentionally neglects the historical situations of writing and passing on. Although the analysis does not overlook the fact that every epic developed out of exclusive cultural and chronological contexts, it favors symbolic and ethical appeals as compared to factual historicity (MacIntyre 81). Furthermore, the selective focus on given books is bound to exclude others, which can be regarded as considerably important episodes that might diversify the moral panorama as both texts are extremely large and multifaceted. However, focusing on such crucial occasions, the work attempts to seize the key moral and tragic trends which characterize the heroes of both worlds.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Heroism and ethical consciousness of critical discourse are complex topics of discussion in both *The Iliad* and *The Mahabharata* that have invited literary, philosophical, and comparative studies in literature, philosophy and comparative settings. Often treated as the classic Western tragedy, the *Iliad* is often interpreted and read as the tale of heroic fatalism where personal heroism is challenged by the deity. C. M. According to Bowra, the milieu of Homer is a moral economy in which the sense of honour, pride and destiny dominate, so that the grandeur of the hero cannot exist without misery (Bowra 53).

An example of a tragic hero, such as Achilles, is representative of tragic glory, and his anger is his source of fame, as well as, his ultimate downfall. This interpretation is extended by H. D. F. Kitto who is keen to emphasize that the heroism of Homer is not blind rage, but an act willfully directed to excellence (*arete*) which is bounded by fate (*moira*). Kitto refers to the awakening of the heroic conscience in the moral development of Achilles rage to empathy as a key feature of the tragedy in the *Iliad* (Kitto 97). Similarly, E.R.Dodds believes the *Iliad* to have been a symptom of the shame culture of ancient Greece, where moral value is evaluated in relation to honour and social acceptance in place of an internalized sense of moral culpability (Dodds29).

On the other hand, the *Mahabharata* provides a slightly more complex moral landscape based on *dharma* fluid moral code, capable of balancing duty, right and consequence. N. Bhattacharya believes that the *Mahabharata* redefines heroism as moral duty and turns the prerogative of the warrior to seek glory into a spiritual quest with understanding of himself (Bhattacharya 61). The instance of paralysis when Arjuna is in the battlefield symbolizes the shift of the own to the internal consciousness.

S. Radhakrishnan views *Bhagavad Gita* as a metaphysical dialogue about action without attachment arguing that moral nobility is not the act, but the virtue of the intentions (Radhakrishnan 214). K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar situates this ethical conception within the broader Indian system, in which the *Mahabharata* is said to spiritualise the hero, so as to generalise the war between the warrior in its morality pilgrimage (Iyengar 132). As such, whereas Homeric ethics lives according to honour in the context of the gods and men, the ethics of the epic of Vyasa has been restructured to mean *dharma* with respect to self and universe.

Comparative Perspectives by Modern Scholars

There are some comparative works which have attempted to analyse the parallels between the Iliad and the Mahabharata yet few have studied their ethical and tragic aspects together. M. Bowra in his work on the heroic poetry and C. O K Narayan in his work on the Ethical aspects of the epics both bring out the universality of the heroic code, although they do not deny cultural differences in the code.

Narayan underlines that Achilles and Arjuna are both at the gateway of moral enlightenment, but the way they come to the understanding is different, Achilles by compassion and Arjuna by spiritual insight (Narayan 87). A. K. Ramanujan offers a linguistic/cultural approach to comprehending these differences where the Greek heroism exudes clarity and personal responsibility whereas Indian heroism is vague and shared responsibility (Ramanujan 44).

To Ramanujan, the polyphonic moral universe of the Mahabharata can be compared and contrasted with the monologic code of honour that runs in the Iliad, but both express the same moral dilemma. There are psychological and ethical ways of representing the situation based on comparable ways in which Achilles is wrathful and doubtful, as discussed by other scholars, including Wendy Doniger and Emily Wilson, espousing that both the heroes undergo a transition between emotion directed by ego to one directed by insight into morality (Doniger 156; Wilson 109). Their writings confirm the necessity of a comprehensive process that does not divide these epics into more or less detached cultural artifacts, but as a complex interrelationship of the human moral struggle.

Theoretical Grounding: Tragic and Ethical Frameworks

The paper is based on three major theoretical perspectives which include Aristotelian tragedy, Indian dharmic ethics and contemporary virtue ethics. According to Aristotelian approach, the tragic hero is characterized by hamartia (error), peripeteia (reversal), and anagnorisis (recognition). The wrath of Achilles is his hamartia, and his realization of the common mortality between him and Priam in Book XXIV is his anagnorisis (Aristotle 41). This corresponds to the classical tragic structure in which the knowledge of morality is due to suffering. Indian ethics of dharma on the other hand as developed in the Bhagavad Gita, views tragedy in both the moral and metaphysical perspectives.

The revelation about karma yoga, or right action, is a personal feeling and emotion, which is what Arjuna acknowledges in his state of desperation (vishada yoga) and later enlightenment (Radhakrishnan 217). In this case, tragedy does not mean fallen of grace but the suffering awakening to spirituality. Lastly, the modern version of ethical criticism, specifically the Virtue Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre, is a philosophical compromiser of the two. According to MacIntyre, moral virtue is a result of unity of character and purpose and that being a true hero requires acting in accordance with his ethical story even in the face of contingencies in the outside world (MacIntyre 122).

In this perspective, Achilles and Arjuna both can be understood as tragic heroes not because they succeed or fail in the battle, but because they reach clarity in their moral values out of ethical dilemma.

Identification of Research Gap

Although much has been written on the individual analysis of The Iliad and The Mahabharata, a distinct gap in unified studies on the ancient works is created through the use of tragic nobility as an ethical principle. There are structural or thematic parallels in most comparative works: god and war morale; or heroism; but the intersection point of fate, pride, and duty to create a complete moral philosophy across cultures is rarely discussed.

This study attempts to seal that gap by studying how the themes of moral consciousness and tragic realisation interact in the two epics. It places Achilles, Hector, Arjuna, and Karna in the role of the ethical heroes, whose inner struggles are not restricted by the cultural backgrounds, and present universal paradigm of tragic heroism. This work provides the comprehensive understanding of nobility as an ethical paradox: a combination of grandeur and pain that is the timeless hero by combining the Aristotelian, dharmic, and virtue-oriented approaches.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Tragic Nobility

The concept of the tragic nobility lies between great and evil. In his Poetics Aristotle defines a tragic hero as a man who brings forth pity and fear together in a combination of good and evil (hamartia). He/she has to be good, but not perfect whose downfall is caused by a moral error instead of a vice (Aristotle 45). This hamartia or fatal flaw is a catalyst of not only

peripeteia or reversal of fortune but also of anagnorisis or recognition or moral awakening that jointly comprise the tragic experience. Achilles is a good example of such a pattern pushed by insulted pride and rage. His anger separates him not only with comrades but with his own humanity; however, his meeting with Priam in Book XXIV is his anagnorisis or the moment when the compassion is the corrective part of pride, and he is morally clear (Homer 24.507551; Kitto 102).

As a result, the nobility of Achilles is the only tragic aspect that makes it noble because the sufferings and self-awareness give him that. The tragic nobility in the Indian epic tradition has its own moral order of dharma-yuddha, the war against the rules of righteousness, and the deadly force of karma. The Mahabharata reinvents the outer form of the tragedy into an ethical and spiritual voyage, in which the ruin or hopelessness of the hero is not the result of an isolated defect, but rather the struggle between morality and destiny. The dilemma enforced in the battlefield is that of dharma: the conflict of emotive righteousness and the righteous action (Radhakrishnan 212). His conversion by the advice of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita is the Indian equivalent of anagnorisis, where the nobility of his actions lies with doing them without attachment to self-interest (nishkama karma) and to principles.

Similarly, the virtue and sticking to his promise, which makes Karna a tragic hero as the good things he possessed are also his downfall. His misery is indicative of the karmic contradiction in that righteousness when anchored in the personal ego is bound to lead to a loss (Bhattacharya 67). Therefore, though the Aristotelian paradigm refers to tragedy as moral error that results in downfall, the Indian paradigm views the tragedy as moral insight that comes about as a result of suffering. Both cultures collide in the description of nobility as the ability to endure moral stress with grace a state of grace obtained thanks to suffering.

Ethics of War

Ethics of war in Homeric and Vedic traditions are closely connected with the issues of moral, divine punishment, and obligation of a human. The Homeric world does not perceive warfare as a vice, but as a test of virtue (arete) - a place where courage, loyalty, and honor are put into practice. However, what Homer describes is by no means a celebration of violence; the Iliad is filled with contrast between the greatness of war and the tragedy of death.

According to Bowra, heroism is a glorious and a pathetic thing that Homer reminds his readers about the somber side of valour, which is death (Bowra 57). The quest of honour by Achilles shows the Greek dilemma between individual glory (kleos) and charity. His subsequent sympathy of Priam brings war to a different level fighting as a kind of revenge or as moral awakening- a realization that greatness is found not within fighting but in loving (MacIntyre 119). Contrarily, the Mahabharata puts the concept of war in the context of dharma-yuddha a just war that is waged in the name of justice but not power.

Ethical question in the text is based on the fact that Arjuna refused to fight his family which led Krishna to discuss the issue of duty. According to the Bhagavad Gita action that is consistent with righteousness, free of ego and desire, is moral war (Radhakrishnan 215). Therefore, dharma is moral guide and spiritual discipline, which is why it is different to the Greek ideal of arete. Whereas arete aims at excellence, which is attained by accomplishment, dharma aims at harmony, which is attained by righteousness.

Comparing the two ideals, one finds that they have different orientations of moral thinking; arete glorifies personal virtue in the finite world, whereas dharma supports the general order in the infinite cycle of sequentially. But they both agree that heroism should be able to harmonize power and morality, pride and humility, as well as action and thought. In this way, the Mahabharata and the Iliad have some universal moral anthropology, with the nobility of the hero being challenged not by his success, but by doing the right thing in the middle of the mess.

Philosophical Context

Both epics are influenced by ideas of fate, divine will and moral consciousness as a result of philosophical roots. The concept of moira (fate) in the Homeric world vision is the image of an unchanging system, which even the gods cannot violate. In his analysis, Kitto notes that the greatness of Man in the works of Homer is his ability to accept things that he did not create or can do nothing about (Kitto 109).

The awareness of his imminent doom gives Achilles tragic honour; this chooses honour rather than life and thus turning fatalism into freedom (Bowra 62). Such behavior is another proto-Stoic form of sensibility, where moral value is based on interior consistency in the face of exterior necessity- something also subsequently implied in Stoic thought, where virtue is

conformity to reason and consent to divine order (Epictetus 47). On the other hand, the Mahabharata also explains divine will through the concept of karma and cosmic justice. This tradition does not recognize fate as a blind necessity but the manifestation of moral causality.

The Vedantic perspective, especially the one suggested in Krishna in the guidance, is that freedom of morality is achieved through self-control, abandonment and action without attachment. According to the Bhagavad Gita renunciation (sannyasas) is no withdrawal, but an action that lacks an intention to the result and thus transforms the conflict of ethics into spiritual liberation (Radhakrishnan 219). The Stoic and the Vedantic traditions meet in their insistence on the internalisation of the external situations. The two traditions do not find nobility based on results but in the ethical nature of the performer.

Stoic apatheia (absence of destructive emotion) is comparable to the Vedantic objective of equanimity (samatva). According to MacIntyre, the virtuous man lives in compliance with a story of self-coherence, which sustains moral personality amid the suffering (MacIntyre 132). Tragic nobility is made in this synthesis a universal philosophical state: the discovery that greatness in human beings is the ability to persevere in their ethical endeavors, not their success.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Hero and His Fate

In the Iliad and the Mahabharata, the heroism is located within an immutable net of fate, but each of the two epics puts the heroism in their places differently: the Greek one, who of course knows when he will die, decides to achieve glory, and the Indian hero, who knows he is obligated to act, debates the morality of doing so. The readers are clearly advised that going to war in the city will mean a short-lived life and eternal glory, and going back home will mean a long but unmemorable life (Homer 9.410416). This makes his heroism a voluntariness to a predestined death, a sign of nobleness, fulfilled by the way of accepting fate.

On the contrary, Arjuna is not doomed to die during the battle but to face the ethically painful war; his indecisiveness on the battlefield shows that it is neither a lack of courage but an ethical consideration, a refusal to act violently without moral reasons (Radhakrishnan 212). Where Achilles tragedy arises out of his certainty on the face of death, the one of Arjuna emerges out of uncertainty on righteousness. Conflict in both epics is not just a human confrontation, but a

necessity that cannot be avoided and has to happen either in the cosmos or on the will of the gods.

The Trojan War is considered to be predetermined as it is embedded in the greater patterns of Zeus and cyclical development of heroic periods (Kitto 104). In a similar manner, Kurukshetra war is made out as a tool of dharma, a system of correcting the moral decay in the society (Bhattacharya 59). Accordingly, the heroes of both traditions are not as autonomy agents but as moral agents who are attached to a divine scenario. Their nobility is therefore determined as to their reaction towards this inevitability-Achilles by heroically accepting his destined end and Arjuna by taking action despite the presence of grief after he realizes the cosmic explanation of his actions (Gita 2.47).

Pride (Hubris) and Moral Fallibility

Achilles is furious, and this wrath is the main propelling force of tragedy in the Iliad. The aggravated by Agamemnon is not just a personal aggravation but a wounded heroic pride, an affront to his honour and position, and in the Homeric world these two are inseparable and part of his very identity (Bowra 53). This hubris that he shares with pride alienates him to the Greek community and leads to the death of Patroclus, which is an indirect effect of refusing to fight (Homer 16.2045).

In turn, the majesty of Achilles and his ethical weakness go hand in hand: the powers that drive him to the heights of becoming the greatest Achachean man also blind him to the greater human price of his rage. Karna of the Mahabharata represents a culturally different but similar display of tragic pride. The gift of gratitude and a desire of proving his value to society despite the social stigma, his loyalty to Duryodhana takes the shape of the noble but self-destructive steadfastness (Iyengar 129).

Karna is not ignorant of his Kshatriya lineage and is conscious of the relative status between him and the Pandavas, but loyalty and honour come first before the truth and reconciliation. This is not that hubris in the Greek meaning, but something like dharma-bound arrogance, where devotion and individual promises replace a larger ethical balance (Karna Parva, cited in Bhattacharya 71).

In both instances, the ego be it the indignation (Achilles), or unswerving loyalty (Karna) blurs the sense of right and wrong and leads the hero to his/her doom. The thing that connects the

two characters, Achilles and Karna, is the rigidity of their self-conception of heroes that leaves little space to compromise. Honour is in negotiation. It is this absolutism of honour that makes them being tragically noble: they are considered too great to be ruled by pragmatism only. However, this denial of yielding is what the epics ultimately come to tender with the instances of recognition and pathos.

Duty and Ethical Conflict

The crisis of battlefield that Arjuna experienced on this ultimate battlefield has become the most overt dramatization of the ethical conflict in all world epic literature. He questions educators, Romans, and family thus claiming that victory gained after their annihilation is not worth gaining (Radhakrishnan 213). The episode emphasizes the ability of compassion to stay action and shows that an emotion can claim to have an ethical claim. The Bhagavad Gita response by Krishna redefines duty based on the idea of nishkama karma which means selfless, desireless action, by saying that the performance of the duty is the Arjuna should perform it because this is the cosmic and social duty he must do (Radhakrishnan 217).

Duty, in this sense is understood as not just obedience but as conformity of universal order. The concept of ethical conflict is relatively softened in the Iliad, but still it is relevant, as applied in the character of Hector and Priam. Hector also admits that the city of Troy will be destroyed, his struggle will be meaningless but does it because of the feeling of communal and family defender (Homer 6.441465). Such a response by Priam in Book XXIV is the most tragicethical act in the poem: he does not go to Achilles as a king, but as a father who has lost his son, pleading the similarity in mortality between him and Achilles (Homer). Both examples show that even in a society where shame and honor are the primary values, human compassion may break martial service (Kitto 111).

As a result, whereas Arjuna needs moral encouragement in order to take action, Hector needs some other kind of encouragement not to run, which is that heroism is always bargained at the expense of tenderness. Therefore, in both epics duty can hardly exist in a vacuum; it is always in conversation with emotion, kinship and conscience. This relation is the primary contention of tragic ethics because what is morally right is often painful and pain is not necessarily an implication of what is morally incorrect.

The Tragic Resolution

The two epics both lead towards the moments of recognition and reconciliation that softens down the harshness of war and pride. The meeting with Priam in Iliad XXIV shows the culmination of the morality development in Achilles. Priam reminds Achilles of his father himself, and Achilles cries with him; his anger changes to a feeling of common humanity (Homer 24.507551). This experience is an anagnorisis of Achilles: he accepts that glory does not help to overcome grief and that even the ultimate hero is a son, a mortal one. Accordingly, his nobility is augmented and humane. Under this case, tragedy ends not in victory but in sympathies (Bowra 62).

The resolution of Arjuna on the contrary is more philosophical rather than emotional. After Krishna gave his directions, he says, and his delusion is being destroyed, I have recovered my memory, and I will do what you say to me (Radhakrishnan 233). The removal of suffering does not help him, as the war will continue and his beloved people will die, but the insight. He embraces the order of things in the universe and his place in it. Reconciliation of Achilles is horizontal, i.e. it concerns two suffering mortals, whereas of Arjuna is a vertical one, i.e. it is a matter of mortal free will and the law established by God.

The two resolutions thus outline a path of evolution starting with vengeance to wisdom, with pride to humility and with individualism to universality. Achilles is no longer saying I have been wronged but we all suffer, Arjuna is no longer saying I cannot kill my kin but is saying I must comply with the divine order. In this way, both epics testify to the fact that true nobility is defined not by the bloodthirstiness of the battlefield but by a broadened mind. Tragic nobility is, therefore, the ability to stand in the storm and nevertheless do the right thing-compassionately, as it is with Achilles, and righteously, as it is with Arjuna.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND ETHICAL SYNTHESIS

The moral and philosophic worlds of the Iliad and the Mahabharata are unified in the effort to bring heroic spirit and moral awareness into one, but they differ in the interpretation of the connection between destiny and morality and human choice. The Iliad expresses a very Western tragic fatalism, in which the most noble men are only considered to have reached their greatness when they accept suffering and death.

The heroism of Achilles is based on his willingness to live a short, wonderful life by choice, thus taking moral pride in the circumstances of his fate (Homer 9.410–416). It is his tragedy of realizing that he can and is destined to die, in which he operates with uncompromising integrity (Kitto 109). Therefore, the Greeks find excellence in the consciousness of finitude: the hero is healthy because of his ability to endure the indispensable with a sense of grace.

Bowra notices that to the Greek mentality, the ability of man to endure or to bear the will of fate is how the nobility of man is tried and not by success (Bowra 66). The Mahabharata, conversely, expresses an Eastern version of transcendence of moral codes, in which fate never destroys the freedom but instead calling the self to promote self-understanding. The battle of Kurukshetra is the dharma need to be established; in the given situation individual soul has to find his moral orientation. As connection between Arjuna and Krishna is redefined, heroism is redefined as knowing oneself in action. By telling him to do things without attachment nishkama karma Krishna will, in so doing, convert duty into a way of liberation and, thus, insinuate that the nobleness of the act is not based on the ability to conquer but on the ability to control (Radhakrishnan 217) . It is interesting to note that, to the extent that Achilles sees no end to his knowledge, to the extent that Arjuna, in his recognition, does not resign but transcends; he conquers doubt by seeing the divine order in the struggle with morals. Thereby, despite the philosophical differences, the two traditions have the common moral horizon the pursuit of integrity in limitation.

Greek fatalism focuses on the virtue of surviving, but the dharmic philosophy of the Indians focuses on the liberty of renouncing. Taken together they make up a composite model of tragic nobility, that is, a state where the moral vision of the hero is widened in consequence of a misfortune. Virtue ethics proposed by MacIntyre is a middle-ground between these two points of view, which dictate that moral excellence is the coherence of ethical personality under circumstances of contingency: to act well even when the story of life is not ours to write (MacIntyre 136). In both epics, the definition of heroism is redirected to moral consciousness in the walls of destiny.

The moral clarity of Achilles can be found when he sees the image of a sorrowful Priam; the spiritual clarity of Arjuna can be found when he sees action as the service of the Gods. The process of development of the two heroes: pride to humility, vengeance to compassion, teaches how nobility is not lack of suffering but ability to turn this suffering to wisdom. Their

expeditions confirm the idea that success is ethical rather than military a triumph of intelligence over lust, of conscience over personality. Finally, it is in the synthesis of Western and Eastern thinking that one is able to view a common philosophical truth that nobility is not achieved by winning, but rather; through self-knowledge and moral survival. The Indian and the Greek tragic hero never undergoes suffering without facing it but on the contrary, he beautifies it by realizing the experience.

The same moral awakening the discovery of human greatness in making our will meet with our wisdom goes into Achilles when he comes to value mortality and in Arjuna in coming to value duty. Both epics hence go beyond their cultural horizons, providing an everlasting contemplation of the ethical spirit of heroism, that the greatest glory is not the victor of cities, but the victor of the self.

CONCLUSION

The Iliad and the Mahabharata replicate the heterogeneous landscape of war as a test of moral heroism claiming that human heroism is not defined by the victory itself, but by the ability to enter the state of ethical ambiguity with clarity and fearlessness. In these epic tales, the battlefield is a moral ground where aspects of pride, duty, compassion and destiny meet and bring out the human conscience.

Achilles, Arjuna, Hector and Karna act as personifications of moral dilemma such that they are forced to make actions as prescribed by the divine or cosmic relations such that their spiritual and moral will is questioned. Bowra notes that the hero is tragic because courage and pain are inalienables (Bowra 69). Homer, as well as Vyasa, uses violence of war not to praise victory, but to question the inner conflicts of the making of moral decisions. Heroism in the Greek world is defined in terms of tragic acceptance of fate.

The awareness of his mortality and the choice to act on the awareness of his mortality can be viewed as a strong sign of a morally unwavering character and can be seen as an illustration of the main theses of the book, namely that being noble is acting according to the constraints placed on a person by fate (Homer 9.410–416). In contrast, the Indian epic Wolofers this acquiescence into the idea of dharma: when Arjuna discovers that right action should not be influenced by emotion and attachment- nishkama karma- this is superior and kind of liberty that is witnessed as the liberation of the self to moral paralysis (Radhakrishnan 218). The two

views have been found to agree that the true nobility is achieved when one goes through self-realization during ethical turmoil. This process of enlightenment or compassion is an internal awakening and is the journey of the popular hero being used not an outer victory.

The moral ideology introduced in these epics still lives within the modern times when leadership, responsibility, and conscience are in conflict. In the political, professional, and personal life people constantly face dilemmas that are structurally similar to those that the ancient heroes: the opposition of principle and pragmatism, fidelity and fairness, selfishness and common good. According to MacIntyre, the moral virtue is found in that togetherness of intent in a story of life, in the sense that one is always acting with integrity despite lack of certainty of consequences (MacIntyre 140). This understanding is equivalent to the resolve of Achilles and a state of action disciplined as in the case of Arjuna.

At a time when ethical relativism holds sway, and seemingly divided loyalties are the order of the day, what the Iliad and Mahabharata drive to highlight is how the best heroism is ethical clarity in the face of misunderstanding. After all, these epics are not bound by time or culture as they ultimately come across a common human fact: that the nobility is not instituted by authority but it is formed through a noble struggle. The feeling of sympathy and awakening of Arjuna and Achilles illustrate the fact that the supreme measure of heroism is not victory, but awareness. Both a metaphor and a reality the war is transformed into a place where the soul gains wisdom. Thus, the Homeric fatalism and the transcendentalism of Vedanta are more or less the same way to say that the most significant triumph is the domination over personality and even in the conditions of the post-war processes, the moral spirit may rise without diminution.

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