

Analysing the Queens of Hastinapur by Sharath Komarraju through the Lens of Contemporary Mythological Literature of India

Chandrika Gudapati¹, Prof. Dr. K. S. Ramesh²

¹Research Scholar, Adikavi Nannaya University, Andhrapradesh

²Research Supervisor, Adikavi Nannaya University

Abstract - Expanding the epics and mythological story rather than retelling them has become a trend in Indian contemporary English literature. In this concern, the book by Sharath Komarraju named the Queens of Hastinapur is no different as it has presented a comprehensive picture of the female characters of Mahabharata, the great epic. In the last few years, contemporary writers have started working on the retelling of the mythological texts and epics, and Mahabharata is one of them that has got the priority of the writers while developing an awe inspiring story out of the mythology.

Index Terms - Mythology, warfare, Heroism, Epic, Male domination.

INTRODUCTION

Sharath Komarraju has written the Hastinapur Series that contains the Queens of Hastinapur that is the third book of the series. A male-dominated story of heroism, valour, warfare, victories, ambitions, and dreams that narrates the voices through a male lens. It has been sophisticatedly retold through the eyes of powerful and important celestial women such as Ganga and Jahnavi, the foster daughter of Ganga. Hence, this research paper focuses on analysing the third book of Hastinapur Series by analysing and reviewing the character of the three queens of Hastinapur, Gandhari, Pritha, and Madri. Pritha is also known as Kunti.

RETOLD MYTHOLOGY - QUEENS OF HASTINAPUR

Fantasy and mythology go side by side in this amalgamation of thoughts that lead the readers beyond the story of the epic. Divergent attitudes of the social norms towards characters have created the

demand for working efficiently in the field of mythology. It is also essential to achieve the connection through the contemporary ideologies and issues through the mythological story in the selected book (Arya, 2019). Therefore, the analysis is essential in the form of bringing the innocence of the story through the brutal disillusionment. The painful stories of the women are crafted in minute details that leave the readers in awe and pool of thoughts.

There are lots of twists and turns in the thinking and presentation of the women characters in this book. Understanding the powerful determination of the queens, kings to stand the brutality of the society along with the destinies can help in managing the destinies. The fates that can help in managing the fresh side of the epic with an extending version of the epic. For example, manipulations, tricks, ambitions, and rears of humans have been presented in minute details. When it comes to having the glimpses of the complex characters, celestials such as Vishnu and sage Vasishtha have been portrayed in way of novelty.

Indian English literature has witnessed a rapid change in the form of rationalising the elements from mythology in the case of presenting the story from a different perspective. For example, the powerful groups have worked efficiently in the procedure of describing the moments of going beyond the classification of issues among the queens. It is the battle of ego, self-representation, and approval of the society as the Queen Mother. Therefore, this literary work is quite similar to the contemporary works of the Indian writers on the canvas called retold mythology. For example, Amish Tripathi has written two most popular series on Shiva and Ram Chandra through the Shiva Trilogy and Rama Chandra Series.

These two series have retold the story of Shiva and Ram Chandra, two normal human beings in the way of reaching the status of the Gods. These two men with their unique quality of works and thoughts have generated examples of living a better life through better works made a difference in the lives of the people. These are the stories of human beings who are extra-ordinary in their deeds, and who have achieved the godliness only through the noble thoughts and care for the common people. Hence, it is no different in the case of the book of Komarajju that has helped in identifying a different dimension through the works.

A significant swing is noticed in the field of Indian fictional landscape that has reached every sphere of life in the present age. Most importantly, the generational change is also noticed in the case of the unique taste of reading of the works from the rooted culture rather than the colonial attire. The unique approach of writers regarding presenting the old age story in a different way that can meet the expectations and needs of the readers in the present day has become a trend. A refreshing perspective regarding Indian culture in the writing of the contemporary writers has been identified and created in the new surroundings (Ghosh, 2021). The thoughts and attributed scientific explanations to the conventional cultural ethics is another crucial aspect in the case of writing the indigenous Indian culture through a refreshing perspective to revive the rich tradition of Indian 'heroic age'.

Indian writing has revolutionised ancient Indian culture and history through Indian Writing in English to acquaint the Indian readers from the array of divergent attitudes. Folklore and mythology are the core of Indian civilization along with the culture of the nation that comes with the touch of individual talent and traditional approach towards a mythological story. For example, in this case, the novel *the Queens of Hastinapur* only presents the importance of the queens from the Hastinapur Dynasty who have silently changed the course of history with their prolific characters. The queens never lacked in wisdom and the knowledge in their approaches; however, they have not ever failed to create different forms and themes in the art of writing in the present novel. The literary artists in this age are playing a crucial role in changing the concepts of the nationalist struggle and the celestial approaches of

the story. However, it is worth noting that the story stands for every aspect of the interests and the needs of the present day youth and readers regarding morality and ethics.

The representation of the social values, morality and the struggle of the women is quite relevant in every moment of life. For example, in the novel of *Ashwin Sanghi's Krishna Key the life of Krishna* is revisited and recreated through the elements of present-day touch. At the same time, Shiva and Rama Chandra got the recreation in their character through the pen of Amish. It has also been identified that the condition of the recreation of the love story of Sati and Shiva has also been presented in different perspective. It has also been identified that the relation of the mythology and the real life of present day has been created in an awe-inspiring way where the characters from the age-old period got a unique touch of contemporary age (Maurya, 2021). In this concern, the characters from the epic such as Mahabharata have also got a new life with the variant of thinking and interpretation that can help in improving the condition of the marginalised voices of the book. Therefore, Komarajju is not the only one to represent and recreate the story of the Epic Mahabharata that has created a mesmerising world for the readers in their own mind. It has helped them to create a world of peaceful and ethical thoughts that can also influence them to stick to the book from the beginning to the end.

Most important part of the novel is that unexplored part of the epics and the mythological stories has been explored through the unique lens of the writer. It can visualise the pain, love, weaknesses, strength, ego, and brutality of the human mind from every part of the story. For example, in the *Queens of Hastinapur* no woman character tried to get the attention of the King. Whether it is Kunti or Madri, everyone wants to present themselves as the important part of the King that can help them to get the respect that they deserve. Threads of feminism and the sexuality have also been noticed in this age to work on the present scenario that can help in maintaining the constant interests of the readers. Sustaining the relevance of the working opportunities can only help in improving the level of the magic with the vulnerability and heroism.

SILENCE OF THE CHARACTERS IN MYTHO- FICTION

Silence of women provided the opportunity to show the artistic approach and magic of the pen of Komorajju. The author has played an important role in helping the reader to learn the different shades of character that could affect the plot of the story of Mahabharata. The epic contains the story of glorious celestial women who did not get the sufficient voice to portray themselves in the male-centric works. However, the novel has helped in retelling the regrets, sacrifices, and love of the women faced brutality and negligence from the society. In the altar of fear and insecurity of gods the celestial women were forced to come to the earth and lead their life to fulfil the needs and expectations of the gods. For example, it was the mother Ganges who helped the “Asta Basu” to get their real form. However, in this book, the women got their voice to send their plea of getting the equality through the quench for feminism in the form of helping the entire society to stay together.

The queens have never got the platform to express their views and their wishes. For example, while Gandhari, the wife of Dhritarashtra wanted to become the mother of the heir to the throne it was the same wish of Madri and Pritha, two wives of Pandu. These queens never failed to show their interests in being the mother of the heir to the throne in the sense of becoming the Queen Mother to gain the status of being the mother of the great King. For instance, while Gandhari always stayed calculative in justifying her deeds in every norm. On the other hand it was Pritha who felt unfair to the judgments of Pandu towards her by selecting Madri to love more as she was more beautiful. Kunti always felt manipulated and neglected due to the presence of a more attractive Madri of age fifteen. In opposition, Madri, a fifteen year old queen, behaves as a child that shows her innocence (Sasi, 2021). However, she was also entangled in the political approaches of the society.

Painful stories of the queens are the most important parts of the novel that involved the queen in sealing the destinies and fates of their children. Mothers are the most influential persons in the lives of their children who mould the behaviour and thinking of the children for the future. It is no different in the case of the book as the queens have never failed in

managing the entire task of influencing the children to be involved in the brutal field of war.

The unknowable parts of the stories of the queens have been presented in minute detail along with the ways of presenting the story of Ganhari, Pritha, Madri, and Ganga, the powerful women of Hastinapur who had the power to prevent the destruction of the dynasty. Redemption, sin, and bloodshed of the society have affected the entire plot of the story along with the glory of the dynasty. Female characters got the importance in this book while the epic was presented only through the lens of male characters. It was not the only field of battle that created Kurukshetra, and the root of the battle of Kurukshetra lay under the stars and horseback, in the prisons and shrines, and besides the sacred lakes and hermitages. On the other hand, the bed chambers and the throne rooms also played the equal role in creating the tension among the princes and the royal men to create such a war that was the destruction of humanity. However, it is the battle of ending the unethical and immoral deeds of children who became men before the eyes of their mother along with the help of the gurus in their hermitages.

Primarily, the concept of breathing into the silence of the Mahabharata has created a different atmosphere in the mind of the common readers of this age in the form of presenting the words more efficiently. It is the story of glorious women in the epic who have never failed to protest against the inequality and injustice happening to them. On the contrary, they have also created a gripping retelling of the story of the epic through the woven strings of women by presenting the most important aspects of energising the magic and skill of the writers through wordplay.

The pace of the novel has also attracted the readers to stay in the line of reading by maintaining a constant flow. It is neither slow nor fast in the sense of developing easily relatable characterisation. The plot also created an impact on the thinking and approaches of the readers towards the plot of the novel. The fantasy of being a part of the royal world has created the most important aspect in the lives of the protagonists. It created the personality development along with the imagery of the narration. The style of narrating a story is the most important aspect in presenting the personality and imagery from the epic that was unreached for the readers (Sen, 2021). Therefore, the easy, lucid, and crisp language

of the story has also gripped the attention of the readers in various forms that help them to go on a roller-coaster ride. However, the book has not used any jargon that could block the thoughts of the readers with ill-fitting phrases and words.

Reactions and the actions of the characters always create the weaknesses and strengths. It can help them in maintaining the personality and the imagery of creating balance between the weaknesses and strengths of the characters through the magical journey of manipulating events around the women along with their approaches to manage and process those incidents by handling them efficiently. A creative story-teller is seen whenever the writer wants to present a grave scene or a tension among the queens. It has always provided a clear air to the insightful reading for the lovers of mythology in a tone of contemporary insight.

The book has created a sensation among the hearts of the Indian Mythology lovers who have interests for learning the women characters more methodically. The concern of the book is to fill the gap regarding the silence in the epic that crafted different types of thinking in India. Furthermore, there are lots of possibilities in creating stories in the form of feeling and filling the silence of Mahabharata; however, Komarajju has never failed in meeting the gap by leaving the readers wanting more writings and thoughts from his magical world. A fresh perspective is presented in every word of the book that could help a reader to reach the feed of having a greater and better idea of the epic from a newer perspective.

Perspective is everything, and it is the style of writing that attracts the readers in the form of engaging the readers with the style of prose. It has also been identified that the well-paced journey of the book has helped in working on the aspects of completing the task of filling the gap of reading something fresh in the mind of the readers. Most important parts of the book are the queens and their characters from different dimensions that helped the entire world to work logically. For example, the detailing of the scene by developing the characters efficiently have helped the writer to portray his specification in creating a different type of writing style that gives a fresh air to the minds of the readers. The unfolding appeal of the characters has made everything easy for the readers while understanding the attractiveness and the beauty of characters.

The brutality of the faith is also not neglected in this story as both the queen of Pandu Pritha and Madri wanted to become the mother of the first child of the King; however, the truth of Pandu being an impotent thrashed the dream of the queens. The book has affected the typical thinking and views of people and readers regarding the characters of the queens of Hastinapur as not worthy to read has gone in vain (Upadhyaya, 2021). On the other hand, the dark natures of human desires also went in vain when the things regarding the point of thoughts came into notice. The voice of the mythological female characters was faint until the book revealed the possibilities of the wave of thoughts and the procedure of dealing with the truth in the lives of the people came into the notice. It has also been identified that the ruthless and independent nature of the women always impressed the readers through the unique idea of reaching the unknown and portraying them as the known facts for the entire community of readers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study of the book along with the evaluation of the plot and characters can identify the story as a wonderful journey for the readers in the path of unknown facts and silence of Mahabharata. There are lots of potential parts in the epic that could be presented to fill the gap of the silence through the typical words and thoughts in the mind of the queens. However, the book gave voice to the queens who were partly unknown. Most importantly, people claim to know the queens of Hastinapur as they are unknowable with their pain, love, and quest for being satisfied. The satisfaction among the queens is missing in every step of life. For example, while the desirable and attractive Madri failed to become the mother of the first child of Pandu, Kunti never got the sufficient love and attention from Pandu due to the unavoidable attractiveness and beauty of Madri. On the other hand, Gandhari always felt neglected and manipulated from the hand of Bhishma as she was forced to marry the man who could not become the King. Hence, it is the mother Ganga and Jahnvi who were also entangled in the cruelty and brutality of the human beings along with the celestial beings.

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