

**BREAKING THE TABOO OF MYTH: EXERCISE OF GUILT AND BOLD
REVELATION OF INFIDELITY IN M T VASUDEVAN NAIR'S *BHĪMA: LONE
WARRIOR***

Aishwarya P Nair,

M Phil Research Scholar

Sri Krishna Arts and Science College, Coimbatore,

Email: aishnirmal20@gmail.com

Abstract

Mahabharata is one among the oldest epics of the world. This saga of war, loss, and victory has been rewritten and retold by many authors and poets in many languages. But M T Vasudevan Nair's novel *Randaamoozham* powered by its English translation *Bhīma: Lone Warrior* is one and unique in its true essence. This paper tries to explore how through the perspective of Bhima, the author breaks the taboo and myth of the epic by voicing the voices that are never destined to be heard in a universe that is a deadly amalgamation of patriarchy, masculinism, and casteism.

Keywords: Infidelity, myth, polyandry, and taboo

Introduction

A taboo is actually created as friction within society as a way to socially control people and force them to comply with approved cultural values. In a wider sense, the term 'taboo' can be defined as a social or religious custom prohibiting discussion of a particular practice or association with a particular place, person or thing. When it comes to literature words and themes become a boundless entity. And that is exactly the reason why taboos fascinate many writers and artists. We are all rebels at heart and are drawn to the denied, unacceptable and forbidden. Many readers also find taboos fascinating because they show what is excluded or different in society.

Madath Thekkepaattu Vasudevan Nair, popularly known as MT, is an Indian author and screenplay writer. It was conducted by The New York Herald Tribune. He has won many prestigious awards like the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award, Padma Bhushan and Jnanpith. His notable works include *Naalukettu*, *Manju*, *Kaalam* and *Asuravithu*. His novel *Randamoozham* powered by Gita Krishnankutty's English translation *Bhima: Lone Warrior* is one and unique in its true essence. It has won him the Vayalar Award and Muttathu Varkey Award. It was

translated into English in 1997 as *Second Turn*. The latest English translation as *Bhīma: Lone Warrior* by Gita Krishnankutty was published in 2013. The novel has been translated into many languages including Tamil version translated by Kurunjivelan under the title *Irandaam Adam*. This novel which retells the story of *Mahabharata* from Bhimasena's point of view is credited as M T's masterpiece.

Demystifying the myth through bold revelation

The novel begins with the episode of "Mahaprasthanam" when the Pandavas after renouncing their kingdom and worldly possessions embark on a final pilgrimage to the Himalayas. They set out on this journey in order to enter heaven in their human form. It deviates from its traditional mythical form when Bhīma stays back to take care of Draupadi who is the first one to fall before entering the gates of heaven. The demystification and demythification begin here and the rest of the tale is told in flashback. The author imposes the fact that a myth is often endorsed by rulers and priests which is closely linked to religion and sometimes spirituality. The main characters are usually gods or supernatural beings in mythologies. So a myth is often defined as a narrative which plays a fundamental role in explaining how a society's customs, traditions, and taboos were established and vindicated.

As mentioned earlier Bhīma is the central figure of the novel and his intense feelings of anguish and indignation are portrayed uniquely by the author. The theme of infidelity revealed through the female characters brings the epic down to the level of normal mortal beings in familial settings with a touch of classical significance. Bhima has always been portrayed as dull-witted despite his great physical powers. But he has been recreated by M T by assigning him the role of an agile character seething with emotion. The readers are made aware of the fact that it is Bhīma who truly brings the victory in the war of Kurukshetra and yet he never tastes the fruit of success because the limelight is always for his younger brother Arjuna. In fact, the concept of polyandry has also been redefined. Since time immemorial the sympathy was always for Draupadi who had to marry five men to uplift the concept of Dharma.

Polyandry is widely defined as a practice where a woman has more than one husband. But here it is Bhīma who changes the face of the myth of polyandry by revealing how his psyche is also affected in spite of being a man. Many episodes reveal how Bhīma realizes the infidelity of Draupadi. She is portrayed as a shrewd woman who always depends on Bhīma for her emotional support. But physically and also in the psyche level, she likes the company of the handsome Arjuna the archer who won her in Swayamvara. This is revealed in the episode of the lovemaking scene in the novel. In this scene, Bhīma is overwhelmed with joy after his consummation with Draupadi which is, in fact, a rare notion. He is surprised and also happy but is shattered when Draupadi asks him to go on the duel with Jarasandha instead of Arjuna.

This shows how Draupadi trusts in the powers of Bhīma than any other of her husband but also her care, love, and concern is only for Arjun.

The episode where Bhīma goes in search of Saugandhika flowers is also an interesting one. After many hurdles, he succeeds in getting the flowers from Kubera's garden but is captured by the palace guards. Finally, his mother, wife, and brothers have to come to rescue him and Bhīma proudly gifts the flowers to Draupadi. But she is angry and feels humiliated on his capture and throws away the flowers. The thrown away flowers represent rejected love and the reader cannot stop sympathizing with Bhīma a human being with unfulfilled longings and intense love for Draupadi and who is often ridiculed and misunderstood for leaving his other two wives Hidimbi and Balandhara pregnant with his sons. He is a sensitive soul and a skilled warrior overshadowed by his elder brother Yudhishtira and younger brother Arjuna famed for his skills in archery.

Kunthi is represented as farsighted and manipulative. She doesn't want her sons to quarrel and feel jealous for Draupadi. Bhima is shocked to hear when his mother reveals to him that she intentionally asked her sons to share Draupadi because she could see the lust in the eyes of all her sons. He waits for her reply whether she saw the lust in his eyes for which she does not give any answer. She is represented as an extremely astute woman who quietly works behind the scenes to put her eldest son Yudhishtira to the throne. She is reduced to the level of apolitical savvy. Bold revelations come when she tells Bhīma how the five of them were born not out of any divine gods but borne out of ordinary mortals. Bhima realizes his lineage with Kiratha and he becomes aware of the fact how only Hidimba could satiate his lust. He never expects this revelation from his mother but comes to term with this late revelation.

Bhīma attains the highest level of appreciation and has many facets to his personality. It is only him who stops to take care of Draupadi in spite of the objection from his brother Yudhishtira who is considered to be the epitome of Dharma. This concept of his elder brother's Dharma is never understood by Bhīma which the latter believes does not conform to common sense. He takes care of his beloved wife who is fallen and Draupadi finally realizes his true love but it is too late. Bhima is pictured as lonely and often helpless. He represents a normal human being's tendency to introspect and a desperate desire to succeed. Bhima is always destined to be a "second turner" and yet is a loving husband who did not keep any hatred within himself. All his conquests and victories both in love and war come about as a result of physical strength which he considers both as a boon and a curse. The tragedy of Bhīma is complete with this realization.

Conclusion

With the bold revelation of guilt and infidelity the novel successfully steers clear of all

kinds of mythical and spiritual elements that contemporary revisitation of the past falls into. There have been several novels based on *Mahabharata* in many Indian languages. But in this novel alone there is a depth of knowledge of mythology rituals, sacrifices, psychology human behavior and warfare behind this tale. The reinterpretation of the events through a human lens rather than a mythical one makes it easier to identify the characters in true form rather than the popular version. Readers are to wonder what would have been the scenario if Bhīma was the eldest son and ascended the throne. There is extremely human reasoning depicted behind every action that takes place than a divine or spiritual reason which is termed as Karma in Hindu mythology. *Bhima: Lone Warrior* stands out as the best, which comes from story-teller par excellence with his touch of genius in craft, technique, and characterization.

Work cited

Dandekar, R N. *The Mahabharata Revisited*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1990. Print. Nair, M T Vasudevan. *Bhima: Lone Warrior*. Trans. Gita Krishnankutty. Chennai: HarperCollins, 2013. Print.

White, John J. *Mythology in the Modern Novel*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971