

THE STUDY OF ARCHETYPES AND NARRATIVE ETHICS IN S.L BHYRAPPA'S PARVA

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Abstract

Within infinite myths, lies an eternal truth. Who sees it all? (Devdutt Pattanaik).

Parva: A Tale of War, Peace, Love, Death, God and Man is a profound and thought-provoking Kannada novel written by acclaimed Indian author S.L. Bhyrappa. It is a modern take on the Indian epic Mahabharata. The main focus of this paper is to show the aspects of ethical dilemmas and morality that are shown in the novel through the characters. Archetypal characters and narrative ethics are used to showcase the moral and ethical implications. Four characters, Bhima, Krishna, Draupadi and Kunti are split into four archetypes, who exhibit different characteristics. Through their journeys, the book becomes a sort of philosophical mirror reflecting the diverse nature of human ethics. Bhima, usually seen as an unwavering hero, is painted here with his own human weaknesses. Kunti, a mother and moral guide, navigates the complex world of family duty, love, and personal desires. Draupadi's incredible strength shines through the narrative. Her ability to stand tall despite profound humiliation highlights the unbeatable spirit of human dignity. Krishna, a complex figure of intelligence, grapples with ethical choices beyond regular human limits. His manipulation for the greater good forces us to consider the age-old ethical question of whether the ends justify the means. Ultimately, Parva is about the intricate interplay of human experiences, motives, and convictions. This paper attempts to foreground the ethical dilemmas and issues of morality of quintessentially archetypal characters in the novel—Parva.

Keywords: Parva, Archetypes, Narrative Ethics, Moral, Ethics, Kunti, Krishna, Bhima, Draupadi

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

S.L. Bhyrappa was born in 1931 and is a man of letters who possesses extraordinary knowledge of Indian philosophy, culture, and traditions. His childhood experiences are deeply reflected in his characters, who are extensively connected to their mother traditions (Bhyrappa par. 1). As one of the eight siblings, his childhood is marred by unpredictability and moments of shock. In a mere six years, due to the plague epidemic, he lost his mother, youngest brother, elder brother, and older sister. These hardships and tragedies had an unseen impact on his work.

These experiences of loss and adversity shaped his perspective. He began to seek answers with regard to everything that provided depth to his literary works. Searching for truth of life and the understanding of it is religion to him (Potnis). His style often contains lucidity, depth, and meticulous research. His works tackle social issues and are filled with philosophical questions, and the nuanced portrayal of characters gives his stories a sense of authenticity and relatability. He is always ready to challenge conventional norms and explore controversial subjects. Highlighting his artistic genius, Pradhan Gurudatta maintains,

His philosophical background (a subject he taught in his professional career), his literary pursuit (a keen student and analyst of our ancient, medieval and modern literatures in the various languages, including English and Sanskrit), his sociological and cultural studies (of the various tribes dwelling in the nooks and corners of the world), his vast experience (he has widely travelled in most all the countries), his literally going in search of experiences, his knowledge of other arts (including dance and music), his deep reflection on the various aspects of life and death, his distinctive literary taste (that makes him aim at rasanubhava in his literary creations),.....is the secret of his popularity and eminence (Bhyrappa vii)

His books are evidence of his passion for travel. The originality of his writing wouldn't be there without his travels. S.L. Bhyrappa is a litterateur who exposes human truths and emotions in his works.

ARCHETYPAL CHARACTER- HERO AND MOTHER FIGURE

Bhima from the Mahabharata was the typical archetypal hero character. His actions and qualities align with the hero archetype. He was renowned for his physical strength and courage. Bhima possesses strong moral integrity, as even during a dangerous battle, he adheres to a sense of right and wrong. His actions inspire others to follow him.

In *Parva*, as an archetypal hero character he still possess most of the characteristics of a hero. He killed Raksasa king Hidimba, Bakasura, and a wolf among the men, Keechaka. Hence, he was a brave and valiant man. Bhima, with his humility, selflessness, and ability, even won the devotion of Neela, who became his closest aide.

Even though Bima possesses all these qualities of a hero, he also possesses the negative qualities of a human. His actions may have aligned with the Dharma Yuddha, but his motives were purely personal. He has a deep-seated resentment against the Kauravas for all the cruelties and atrocities they have performed towards the Pandavas.

As for me, what is the point of going back to the palace after twelve years in the forest, feeding on roots and fruits and hunted animals ... I have bit just one goal, one passion in life – to wipe out from the face of this earth Duryodhana, Dussasana, Karna and Shakuni, and the entire Kaurava breed, and the blind fellow who had fathered them. They have humiliated him alive, provoked me in the dice-assembly, insulted my wife as if she were a servant – yes, I live only to avenge all this. Even if peace is made, and we get back to Indraprastha, I shall be the army chief. Even after peace, I shall invade them and slay them all. That shall be my peace (Bhyrappa 128).

Hence, Bhima in this text was more humane and relatable in nature. With his hero-like qualities, his negative qualities as a human are also glorified. In one scenario, Bhima shows his boastful and prideful nature to Krishna as he boasts about his strength and refuses to beg for support from anybody for the war. Even if the war is being played out for his and his brother's own benefit.

The mother figure archetype is a significant and often revered character type in literature and storytelling. This archetype typically embodies maternal qualities such as nurturing, wisdom, and protection. Kunti, a prominent character in the Indian epic Mahabharata, can be analysed as a manifestation of the "mother figure" archetype. Her role as a mother extends beyond biological ties, encompassing emotional support, guidance, and protection for her children and others in her sphere of influence.

Kunti from *Parva* is a resilient character. She is selfless when it comes to her children or family. After the deaths of Pandu and Madri, she could have stayed in the land of the Devas. Dharmadikhari, Marutha, Indra, and the Doctor Twins all came to pursue her and convince her to stay back. But she decided to sacrifice her happiness for her children and go back to Hastinavati.

Different from other mother archetype characters, she's very proud and confident. She will never allow anyone to take what belongs to her and her children. Her wisdom and guidance also depend on this factor.

At that time this very Bhishma had said that there should be no quarrel and got my sons Khandavaprastha. The original capital, Hastinavati, remained with Duryodhana. Now, please send my sons a message, the message that Kunti has returned to Hastinavati. She will not stir from there. They must fight and win Hastinavati. And the coronation must be celebrated in Hastinavati (119).

In the modern versions of the Mahabharata, Kunti as a character was never given the desired respect; her character doesn't even have the depth or growth. She was mostly shown as a harmless mother who loved her children and went with them to be with them. In *Parva*, Kunti has a spine of steel; she stands up for her children and was the glue that strengthened and kept the five Pandava brothers together till the arrival of Draupadi. Kunti commanded respect and devotion from her children, and they were both fearful and respectful of her.

At this point, mother-in-law raised her hand and hit Bhima's arm and Arjuna's shoulder, one blow each. I had never seen a mother who had the power to thrash at that age such strong children...Her blows reduced the two to meek puppies. Utter silence reigned in the hut...(212)

Kunti's character embodies the essence of the mother figure archetype while navigating the complexities of royal and familial dynamics. Her nurturing, wisdom, and protective nature contribute to the emotional depth and moral fabric of the novel's narrative.

ETHICAL DILEMMA AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS

There are countless forms of narrative in the world (Barthes and Duisit 237). But in narrative ethics, stories are used to convey ethical issues and it also regards moral values as an integral part of stories and storytelling (Phelan par. 1). These "stories help us understand one another's morals and values, including what each person deems to be ethical or unethical" (Barsky par. 5). Cydney Grannan says that "both morality and ethics loosely have to do with distinguishing the difference between "good and bad" or "right and wrong"" (par. 2). Bhima is the hero archetype taken here, whose psychological thinking and conflicts he was faced with are studied. It's been seen that Bhima knowingly allowed an old woman of the Bhil Tribe and her five sons to be burned to death alive.

Once again the memory of everything burning, flames all over, consuming the entire wood house, fuelled by ghee oil and dry wood pieces. A piercing cry of agony, and six bodies burnt to cinders, and also the corpse of the assassin, Purochana, hired by Duryodhana. Yes, he deserved to die, all right. But what justice was there in the death of the innocent woman and her five children?... Yes, it was to save our skin. Then Bhima felt the needles of sunlight torture him more intensely. He turned to one side, and closed his eyes. He felt guilty, saying to himself, to save our wretched life we sacrifice anybody! he felt contempt for life itself. Well, he thought what was done was done and the sacrifice already made. Why bother now? (Bhyrappa 138).

Bhima felt guilty but it was a fleeting one. This was a transient' guilt, where the guilt fades as the situation or memory becomes less prominent. This raises questions about the nature of remorse, accountability, and the tension between momentary emotions and lasting ethical convictions. Bhima once fell in love with Salankatankati, another name of Hidimbe, and together they bore a child, but he still eventually left her and their newborn child in the forest with the Rakshasa Tribe to be with his mother and brothers. He was then compelled to return to the forest under Krishna's manipulation.

Raka. "After you left, she gave up meat, drink, roots and fruits, wasting herself. If the child had not been there, she might have perhaps starved herself to death! She lived only for that child." Bhima's heart melted, full of anguish. He was proud of her, of her love and loyalty. He felt that his coming here had not been in vain. Raka continued, "For two or three years she abstained from all male company." These last words suddenly deflated his pride. He felt enraged, itching to get hold of that new man to strangle him (187).

Bhima return to the Boulder and squatted on it. His mind was caught in whirlpools beyond his conscious control. A whole range of emotions invaded him- anger, contrition, humiliation, helplessness... His wrath was rising against his mother, but it was also turning against himself (188).

Bhima was in a lot of mental flux when he understood what happened with Hidimbe after he left. His initial infatuation with Hidimbe, followed by his decision to leave her and their child, and his consequent mixture of regret, pride, and anger reflect the ethical grey areas within human emotions, including love, regret, and the desire for personal growth. One researcher in her PhD thesis reflects that Bhima's attitude is similar to the Aryans in the matter of respect towards one's mother, and this attitude paved the way for his regret (Vandana Devi).

Pandavas are known to have a very strong brotherly bond. The strength and love of their brotherly bond are always on display. But Bhima's thought shows pure contempt for Dharmaraja. He feels that his elder brother has become conceited after he completed the Rajasuya ritual. This conceit of his led to all the shameful and barbaric events that happened. This act of contempt stems from his erosion of trust towards his brother, which undermines the foundation of mutual respect in their relationship.

Krishna's conflicts and the choices he makes about those conflicts often revolve around the greater good and the balance between individual desires and collective welfare. While his intentions may be rooted in achieving a favourable outcome for his people, the means he employs to achieve these outcomes can sometimes be ethically questionable. For example, his manipulation of Bhima to visit his son and bring him to the war demonstrates a classic Trickster manoeuvre. He appeals to Bhima's emotions, leveraging his desire to see his son and wife, to manipulate him into fulfilling Krishna's agenda. While Krishna's ultimate goal might align with the welfare of his people, the manipulation raises ethical concerns about exploiting emotions for strategic gains.

Arjuna and Krishna's friendship is well known. Arjuna considers Krishna his friend for life. Krishna was the one who made the plan for Arjuna to abduct Subhadra and marry her. And he was also the one who cleverly deescalated the situation when Balarama was in a rage due to this incident. Even though Krishna's intention was to create an everlasting and close relationship between the Yadava and Padava through marriage, the way he manipulated his friend and sister shows his pragmatic approach to everything where the ultimate goal matters the most. This sometimes shows a lack of compassion from his side and also raises a question about his flexible moral stand.

Krishna, 'Let us call them back, and impose on Arjuna the condition that our sister will have him and him only as her husband. After he accepts such a condition, we shall celebrate the wedding' (Bhyrappa 317).

For all his amazing traits, Krishna had a weakness for women. This makes him more humane than anything and also a morally complicated character.

Yuyudhana thought, "Why should not Krishna be happy and content with one such exemplary wife? What insatiable appetite for women. Balarama is right. For every woman gained, one specific justification. Satyajit's daughter, Satyabhama. Jambavanta's daughter, Jambavati. Then the others -Bhadra, Mitravinda, Neela, Kalindi, Lakshmana, in all eight regular wives. He had a form no woman could resist. A wizard in words. Razor-sharp intelligence. Always the winner in battle. Wherever he went they offered him brides and he married them all... (413).

Krishna's romantic entanglements and numerous wives, despite his remarkable qualities, also provoke ethical reflections. The text ponders the ethics of his actions, underscoring the moral nuances of his decisions.

Niyoga is a concept where the wife can have a relationship with a man other than her husband. It can only be done for the sake of getting a child so that it can further the bloodline. A woman, through Niyoga, can only have two children. Kunti traversed that limit and had three children through Niyoga, which is tantamount to a sin.

Duryodhana later used this against her. A moral and ethical dilemma is seen in Kunti who suffers from internal conflict as Pandu has strictly ordered her to not enjoy the Niyoga but she cannot help but enjoy the process (Vandana Devi).

Kunti was manipulative and only cared about her and her sons' happiness. When her five children became smitten with Draupadi's beauty, instead of reprimanding her sons and doing what is morally and ethically correct, she instead indirectly forced Draupadi to consider marrying her five sons.

Their mother pulled me close to herself, and spoke, 'Child, you are not just a beautiful girl. Though you are not very fair in complexion, your features - your face, nose, eyes and build have an irresistible attraction. Else how to account for my sons fighting like this over you? I shall return you to your father. What is the point of taking you in as a daughter-in-law, inviting internal conflicts into my household?' (213).

Except for these few negative moral implications, there are a few other positive ones too. Kunti's character and her ethical considerations are a link that connects the moral fabric of the narrative. Kunti's decision to reject the offer of residing in the land of Devas, despite the allure of escaping widowhood, showcases her selflessness and prioritisation of her children's well-being over her own happiness. This self-sacrificing attitude aligns with the ethical principle of putting the needs and welfare of loved ones ahead of personal desires. Her role as the binding force that keeps the Pandava brothers together aligns with the ethical values of unity and loyalty.

In the whole story, Draupadi is a character who has suffered a lot; her agony cannot be compared to any other character in the story. She has undergone both physical and mental torture, and her dignity was stripped in front of the whole world. Her married life was more pain than pleasure (Vandana Devi). "Conception after conception....Children, Post natal period and again marital life" (Bhyrappa 224). Yet, she remained strong. Her mental strength is incomparable.

Many times, her beauty had become her bane. It was her beauty, the reason that she was compelled by Kunti to marry all five brothers so as not to create any enmity between them. But the thing here is that her opinion never mattered that much; in a sense, she was forced to accept such arrangements, or else she would have been sent back to her father. This would have brought a lot of shame to her and her family. What she has experienced and the moral and ethical questions it raises are monumental in nature.

The mother-in-law preached the Dharma of a wife to her daughter-in-law to promote the welfare of her sons, their unity. Krishna went back to her past. "How much I had to suffer to obey this Dharma! Yes, indeed and in words, but in mind? Where did I possess the power to obey the Dharma in mind? Who has such power anyway? How could the mother-in-law realise the force of the Dharma of the mind itself, the mind of the individual person? Yes, I never spoke to any one of them more loving words than I did to the others...I gave myself to the eldest, Dharma, in the same way and with the same devotion as I did to the youngest, Sahadeva. But as for my mind, my inner love, unexpressed through words or deeds... (223-24).

Draupadi's inner struggle is shown here: the pressure she is under to follow the Dharma of a wife, but she also has her own desires, which are unable to be suppressed anymore. Her desires outweigh her Dharma. It also highlights Draupadi's internal struggle to reconcile her actions with her own beliefs and emotions. This raises ethical questions about the balance between Dharma and personal well-being. The conflict between what is expected of her and what she feels internally brings up the broader moral question of how individuals navigate societal expectations while staying true to themselves.

Draupadi's ability to endure extreme suffering while maintaining her dignity raises ethical questions about the human capacity to persevere in the face of injustice. Her refusal to succumb to victimhood showcases the importance of maintaining self-worth even amidst adversity. Her vocal demand for justice after the humiliating incident in the royal court illustrates the ethical importance of holding wrongdoers accountable. Draupadi's conflicts and choices challenge the ethical implications of societal norms and roles assigned to women.

CONCLUSION

Parva deals with characters, their moral consciousness, and their choices that echo the ethical dilemmas of real life. It also deals with the basic emotions of life, such as human emotions, alienation, sex, achievements, failures, and death (Chandrasekhar 92). Bhima, Krishna, Kunti, and Draupadi reflect the diverse nature of human morals and ethics. Bhima loses his credibility as a hero when he sacrifices innocent lives to save his and his family's lives. This incident reveals the raw ethical dilemma that arises when one has to deal with some tough decisions in life. The mother, Kunti, was a complex character; she is selfless as well as manipulative when it comes to her children's wellbeing. Whether it was family duty, love, or personal desires, her decisions were always like an ethical puzzle. One word that aptly describes Draupadi's character is resilience, which shines through the narrative. Her refusal to bow down to the humiliation she faced reflects her unbreakable spirit of human dignity. Like any woman, she struggles to balance societal expectations with personal desires, which represents a moral challenge. Krishna is a figure of extreme intelligence. His manipulation and consideration for the greater good make him grapple with ethical choices beyond his limit. It also makes me revisit the old adage of whether the end justifies the means. His helplessness in the events he can't control makes him relatable and vulnerable. In conclusion, it is all about the ethical values and moral complexities of life and how we embrace

them. It also makes us realize that there are no strict rules as such for ethical considerations; it is all about the complex interplay between human experience, emotions, and motives.

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