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*By: Kshiyama Sagar Meher*



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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

EUROPEAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

BEGC-102

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

**Note:** This paper has two Sections : A and B. Section A is compulsory and has internal choice. Answer any four questions from Section B. All questions carry equal marks.

## SECTION–A

**Q. 1.** Write short answers on any two of the following:

(a) Which characteristics of an epic can be applied to the Iliad? Discuss with examples.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 5, Q. No. 7.

(b) Examine Achilles as a Warrior hero. Give examples.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 13, Q. No. 4.

(c) Does the Iliad have any morals to offer readers? Comment.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 25, Q. No. 1.

(d) Discuss the ending of the Iliad, giving examples from the text.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 21, Q. No. 4. and Page No. 19, 'Reconciliation'.

## SECTION-B

**Note:** Attempt any four questions.

**Q. 2.** Examine the role of fate and destiny in the Greek play Oedipus Rex.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 39, Q. No. 9.

**Q. 3.** Discuss any two elements of tragedy relating these two elements of your choice to Oedipus Rex.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 35, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 4.** Analyse the contribution of indigenous Roman tradition to Roman Comedy.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 75, Q. No. 4.

**Q. 5.** How did the end of classical drama come about? Comment.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 71, 'End of Classical Drama'.

**Q. 6.** Attempt an analysis of Phaedria's position in Pot of Gold.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 90, Q. No. 4.

**Q. 7.** Comment on Euclio as an 'age-last' on the spoilsport in Pot of Gold.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 96, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 8.** Would you agree that Quid's Metamorphoses is an epic? If yes, is it different from the conventional epic? Elaborate.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 5, Q. No. 6 and Chapter-17, Page No. 147, Q. No. 3.

**Q. 9.** How convinced are you about the revenge that Procne takes against the rape of her sister Philomela?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-17, Page No. 148, Q. No. 4, Page No. 145, 'Philomela/Book VI (Lines 620-674)'. ■■

# QUESTION PAPER

December – 2023

(Solved)

EUROPEAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

BEGC-102

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

**Note:** This paper has two Sections: A and B. Sections A is compulsory and has internal choice. Answer any four questions from Section B. All questions carry equal marks.

## SECTION-A

**Q. 1. Answer any two of the following questions:**

(a) Write the story of the Iliad in brief.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-1, Page No. 1, 'The Story of the Iliad'.

(b) Who were the major playwrights of ancient Greek tragedies? Name at least two works of each playwright.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 30, 'Greek Theatre: Major Playwrights'.

(c) Write a note on Fescennine Verses.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-9, Page No. 76, Q. No. 9.

(d) Do you find any influence of another country on the literature of ancient Rome? Discuss.

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-13, Page No. 105, Q. No. 2.

## SECTION-B

**Note:** Attempt any four questions.

**Q. 2. Discuss the notion of honour in the Iliad. Give examples from the text.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-3, Page No. 22, Q. No. 4.

**Q. 3. Examine the moment of anagnorsis in Oedipus Rex. Give illustrations/examples to substantiate your answer.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 38, Q. No. 8.

**Q. 4. Who reports the conditions of Thebes? What do you they have to say about the condition in the city? Illustrate your answer with examples from the text.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-6, Page No. 43, Q. No. 2.

**Also Add:** The chorus' description of the plague is haunting and evocative, emphasizing the overwhelming sense of despair. They paint a grim picture of widespread death, despairing, "Death/so many deaths, numberless deaths on deaths." This poetic repetition amplifies the tragedy, evoking profound pity from the audience. Their desperate cries for aid underscore the helplessness of Thebes' citizens as they face relentless suffering. The vivid imagery and mournful tone of the chorus drive home the gravity of the situation, drawing the audience deeper into the unfolding drama.

The chorus' anxiety about the price of salvation introduces a chilling forewarning. Their unease suggests an impending sacrifice or consequence that will accompany divine assistance, adding an ominous layer to their prayer. This tension seamlessly intertwines with the dramatic irony established earlier in the play, where the audience is aware of Oedipus' unwitting role in the plague's origin. As the chorus pleads for mercy, their apprehension foreshadows the harrowing revelations that will later shatter Oedipus' life and the city's stability.

The juxtaposition of hope and dread in the chorus' prayer mirrors the central conflict of the tragedy. Their words resonate with a duality that encapsulates the human condition-seeking relief from suffering while fearing the unknown consequences of such deliverance. This interplay of emotions propels the narrative toward its tragic climax, where Oedipus' disgrace and downfall emerge as the ultimate price for Thebes' salvation.

Through its poignant appeals and foreboding tone, the chorus not only portrays the immediate horrors of the plague, but also sets the stage for the catastrophic unravelling of Oedipus' fate. Their prayer becomes a powerful narrative device, connecting the suffering of the city to the broader themes of guilt, responsibility, and the inescapable grip of destiny.

**Q. 5. Critically analyse Pot of Gold's assessment of the society of its time. Give examples.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-10, Page No. 82, Q. No. 3.

**Q. 6. Examine the significance of the slaves in Pot of Gold.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-10, Page No. 83, Q. No. 6.

**Q. 7. 'Strobilus desires freedom.' Would you agree? Is this desire for freedom fulfilled? Give reasons for your answer.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-11, Page No. 90, Q. No. 3.

**Q. 8. Did Horace's father contribute to his role as a satirist?**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-15, Page No. 127, Q. No. 3, Page No. 125, 'Horace and His Father'. ■■

# **Sample Preview of The Chapter**

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# EUROPEAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

## Approaching The *Iliad*, The Epic and The Homeric Tradition



### INTRODUCTION

The *Iliad* is an epic poem by Greek poet Homer that narrates the events of the final weeks of the Trojan War, fought between the Greeks and the Trojans. The war which was triggered by the abduction of Helen by the Trojan prince, Paris, lasted for ten years. The *Iliad* can be compared with the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which also have themes of wars. In this chapter, we will study about the *Iliad* and the Homeric tradition.

### CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

#### THE STORY OF THE *ILIAD*

The *Trojan War*, fought between the city of Troy and the Achaeans (Greeks) after Paris of Troy abducted Helen, wife of Menelaus, the King of Sparta, is one of the most important events in Greek mythology. In the ninth year of the war, the Greek army captures Chryse, a town ruled by Troy. Agamemnon and his deputy Achilles, the greatest among the Greek warriors, took two beautiful Trojan maidens, Chryseis and Briseis, respectively, as war booty.

Chryseis' father offers a huge ransom to Agamemnon for the return of his daughter, but Agamemnon refuses to give back her. Chryseis' father prays to the God Apollo to punish the Greeks by sending a plague to sweep through the Greek army and the plague killed many Greek soldiers. After learning that Chryseis is the cause of the plague, Agamemnon returns Chryseis to her father. After that Agamemnon asks Achilles to give him his prize booty, Briseis. Agamemnon claims that as the Commander of the Greek army, he is entitled to have her. Achilles gets furious over the demand and refuses to take part further in the

war. He prays to his mother Thetis to seek the help of the supreme God Zeus to destroy the Greeks.

The Greeks suffer great losses after God Zeus supports the Trojans and Achilles stops fighting. When defeat gets imminent, out of concern for his Greek army Achilles asks his close friend Patroclus to fight the Trojans. Patroclus dies in the battle. After knowing that Hector is the slayer of his friend, Achilles reconciles with Agamemnon and rejoins the battle.

With the help of the Goddess Athena, Achilles kills Hector and drags his body tied to the back of his chariot across the battlefield. Thinking that Hector deserves a hero's burial, Lord Zeus sends the God Hermes to escort, Hector's father, Priam to the enemy camp and pleads with Achilles for the return of his son's body to give him a hero's burial. Priam requests Achilles for his son's body and Achilles relents and returns the body to the Trojans. Both sides agree to a temporary truce and Hector gets a hero's burial in Troy.

#### Approaching the *Iliad*

The *Iliad* can be studied with a reference to the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which depict the battle between good and evil. The Achilles-Hector pair in the *Iliad* can be compared to the pairs of Arjun-Karna in the *Mahabharata* and the Rama-Ravana in the *Ramayana*. A difference is that in the *Iliad*, the Gods are in the foreground with the warriors and dictate the outcome, but in the Indian epics only men fight and the gods stay in the background and do not participate in it. For example, Krishna in the *Mahabharata* plays the role of a mentor.

#### EPICS IN WESTERN LITERATURE

Epics in Western Literature have been composed in different genres.

(i) **Epic poetry** – Examples: Homer's the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Virgil's *The Aeneid*, Spenser's *Faerie*

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Queene, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and Nikos Kazantzakis' *Odyssey*.

(ii) **Epic novels – Examples:** Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.

(iii) **Epic plays – Example:** Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children*.

(iv) **Epic films – Examples:** *Ben Hur*, *The Ten Commandments* and *Gone with the Wind*.

**Definition of An Epic**

Epic poems have elevated forms of expression and celebrated for their exalted themes. Their grandeur of the content is matched by the grandeur of form in which it is written. An epic celebrates the presence of the Divine in the human spirit. Kline says the epic is one of the classical forms of writing that enlarges the human spirit and shows the grandeur and sublimity of life. Sri Aurobindo says an epic is the song of the greatest flight that will reveal from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision, the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purpose of the Divinity in man and the universe. If the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are referred, the distinctness of an epic are:

(i) These epics are long poems. The *Ramayana* has 24,000 verses and the *Mahabharata* is also very lengthy.

(ii) They narrate the heroic deeds of the protagonists – Lord Ram in the *Ramayana* and the Pandavas in the *Mahabharata*.

(iii) These epics are called "*Ithihasa*" or *iti-ha-asa* which means thus verily happened.

(iv) These are works of art "surpassing the dimensions of realism".

**Characteristics of an Epic**

The attributes of an epic are given below:

(i) **Themes:** Epics have exalted theme covering the heroic deeds of a great man and shows the greatness of the divine power. In the *Ramayana*, Lord Vishnu comes to earth as Rama to destroy evil. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the Gods directly take part and determine the humans' fate.

(ii) **Genre:** Epics were written in verse in ancient times and in modern times epic novels and epic plays have used the prose form. They are very expansive and large in scale. Western epics have been written in 12 books or multiples of 12. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have 24 books each. Virgil's *Aeneid* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* have 12 books each.

In the 17th century, Spenser started writing *Faerie Queene* in 12 books, but could complete only 7. Indian epics do not use 12 as a unit.

(iii) **Subject matter:** Epics narrate heroic ideals like courage, honour, sacrifice, patriotism and kindness. They depict the social and cultural life of that period.

(iv) **Language:** Epics use ornamental language. Similes, recurrent epithets, stock phrases and an expressive style are common.

(v) **Poetic inspiration:** Epics have been composed with a high degree of imaginative power, called poetic inspiration and an equally high degree of consciousness of technique.

(vi) **Unity of action:** Epics have the Unity of action, which means that there should be one action and sub-plots should be minimal. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* focus on a single action, directed or caused or influenced by God. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have the Unity of action, that focus on the defeat of the evil and the triumph of the good.

(vii) **Starting:** Epics generally state the theme or subject of the story in the starting. For example, the opening lines of *Paradise Lost* says the aim is to 'justify the ways of God to men'. In the *Iliad*, the starting line says "Rage Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' Son Achilles."

(viii) **Invocation to the Muse:** After the statement of the theme, epics generally have an invocation to the Muse for divine inspiration to narrate the story. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Homer invokes the Muse, seeking inspiration from a higher source.

(ix) **Start in the middle:** Epics generally start in the middle of the story. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* both start in the middle, then move directly forward and the earlier events are presented as flashbacks.

(x) **Story of great valour:** Epics narrate the deeds of great valour and show superhuman courage. The *Iliad* has the divine intervention from the very beginning.

(xi) **Long list of characters:** Epics have long lists of people, objects and places. Main characters give long formal speeches.

### THE HOMERIC TRADITION: CLASSICAL EPICS

The term 'classic' denotes something exemplary, of first rank or the highest class, something of demonstrably enduring quality. The quality that runs through the Classics, known as classicism, is marked by beauty, taste, refinement, restraint, clarity and order. Classicism is often regarded as the vehicle of reason and logic.

Classics in most of the World Literature relate to the most highly developed stage of an earlier civilisation and its culture. In ancient Greece and Rome, they are often associated with works of antiquity. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have the value of responsible humanism during both war and peace. They shape the image of Man as Franz Kafka says like "Ice axe to break the sea frozen inside us". Classics deal with man's struggle against forces of inhumanity and his attempt at restoration of a moral order after a calamitous upheaval. They show the value of order, harmony and beauty in a strife-torn world. Classics exalt us to a higher plane, far away from the mundane world and help us confront greatness. They have come down to us generation after generation and the past canonical genius is pivotal to satisfy our present aspiration to achieve similar heights.

Classical writers do not let out their emotions and feelings. They remain objective, unclouded by personal bias and prejudice. For example, Shakespeare is not found in his plays. Classicism is to be seen both in form and content, which means harmony and control and a restraining and supportive order. It helps us to apprehend noble and profound thoughts, refined and lofty feelings and higher ideals and moral values. Professor Sidgwick defines classical literature as "the essence of a truly humanizing culture". Classical works of the West show that the inevitable defeat of Man by powers that are beyond him, should not make him a helpless victim but rouse him to courageously confront the powers. Greek Classics have a choice-less choice imposed on Man where he has to fight not necessarily for a win, but for a loss. But this does not deter him from confronting a conflict, not always of his own making. In this struggle, man gains his nobility, worth and dignity. According to Harold Bloom, classical works constitute the Western Canon that negates the distinction between knowledge and opinion. Classical literature does not offer false security and pseudo comfort. They show the microcosmic man in eternal confrontation with the macrocosmic universe.

In the *Iliad*, two great heroes subjected to God's force and the end result is what the Gods decide. Achilles, Hector and Patroclus fight when they know that they are not the masters of their fate nor are they equal to the Gods. Hector is humiliated in death, stripped of his heroic stature and dignity. Achilles even in his victory cannot overcome the bitter sense of his own mortality. Shakespeare who wrote 2000 years later refers to when he says "We are unto Gods, like flies to boys who kill us for their sport." The *Iliad* shows the Homeric tradition where the ideal is to fight to be the best, to take away women from the defeated enemy camp as the legitimate due of a victor, and to live as long as one possibly can through one's own strength and power. One man's victory will always be another man's sorrow. Achilles' victory over Hector causes heart wrenching pain to Priam, Hector's father. Hector's victory over Patroclus regarded as an ecstasy of power, brings great and unforgettable pain to Achilles. In Homeric tradition, power was an ideal to secure even if that power was to be had at the expense of someone else's pain. The Homeric world does not have the finer feelings of compassion, generosity towards the enemy, nobility to acknowledge the valour of the enemy. These are only modern world concepts.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q. 1. Attempt in your words what strikes you in the *Iliad* story.**

**Ans.** The women play a crucial role in the *Iliad*. The Trojan war happens because of a woman, Helen. Later on, after Agamemnon relinquishing Chryseis, he asks Achilles to give him Briseis. That angers Achilles and he withdraws himself and his men, the Myrmidons, from the war. He asks his mother Thetis to convince Zeus, the divine ruler of the earth, to let the Trojans temporarily gain the upper hand in the war, so the Greeks will regret his absence.

**Q. 2. Can you identify a few other epics in Indian and Western literature?**

**Ans.** Some of the epics include Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Ezra Pound's *Cantoes*, Nikos Kazantzakis' *Odyssey*, Homer's the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Virgil's *The Aeneid*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children*, *Ben Hur*, *The Ten Commandments* and *Gone with the Wind*.

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**Q. 3. Attempt the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Delineate only the main plot.**

**Ans.** The *Ramayana* narrates the story of Rama in Ayodhya. Rama wins the hand of the beautiful princess Sita, the daughter of King Janaka. Rama, his brother Lakshmana and Sita go to forest to spend 14 years get exiled to forest after a plotting by his step-mother. Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, abducts Sita. Rama and Lakshmana set out to rescue her. After numerous adventures, they enter into alliance with Sugriva, king of the monkeys, and, with the assistance of Hanuman and Ravana's brother, Vibhishana, they attack Lanka. Rama kills Ravana and rescues Sita. After that, Sita undergoes an ordeal by fire to prove her chastity. After they return to Ayodhya, Rama becomes the king of Ayodhya, but when he learns that the people still question the queen's chastity, and he banishes her to the forest. There she meets the sage Valmiki and at his hermitage gives birth to her two sons. The family is reunited when the sons come of age, but Sita, after again protesting her innocence, asks the mother earth to take her.

The *Mahabharata* tells the story of a great battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas on the field of Kurukshetra. The story starts when the blindness of Dhritarashtra, the elder of two princes, causes him to be passed over in favour of his brother Pandu as king on their father's death. A curse prevents Pandu from fathering children, however, and his wife Kunti asks the gods to father children in Pandu's name. As a result, the god Dharma fathers Yudhishtira, the Wind fathers Bhima, Indra fathers Arjuna, and the Ashvins (twins) father Nakula and Sahadeva, who were born to Pandu's second wife, Madri. The enmity and jealousy develops between the cousins. The Pandavas leave the kingdom when their father dies. During their exile the five jointly marry Draupadi, who is born out of a sacrificial fire and whom Arjuna wins by shooting an arrow through a row of targets, and meet their cousin Krishna, who remains their friend and companion thereafter. The Pandavas return to the kingdom, but they are again exiled to the forest for 12 years, when Yudhishtira loses everything in a game of dice with Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas. The feud leads to the great battle on the field of Kurukshetra. All the Kauravas die in the battle. The five Pandava brothers and Krishna survive. Krishna dies when a hunter, who mistakes him for a deer, shoots him in his one vulnerable spot – his foot – and the five brothers, along with Draupadi and a

dog who joins them set out for Indra's heaven. One by one they fall on the way, and Yudhishtira alone reaches the gate of heaven. After further tests of his faithfulness and constancy, he is finally reunited with his brothers and Draupadi, as well as with his enemies, the Kauravas.

**Q 4. Attempt an appreciation of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as epic poems.**

**Ans.** The *Ramayana* is one of the great epics of ancient India. It narrates the journey and adventures of the hero Rama, the prince of Ayodhya who is possibly an incarnation (*avatar*) of Vishnu to annihilate vice. It is a long poem. The *Valmiki Ramayana* has 24,000 verses, which are grouped into chapters called Sargas which narrates an episode or intent. Sargas themselves are grouped into books called Kaandas. Kaanda, meaning the inter-node stem of sugar cane, refers to a particular phase or an event of the story in the course of story telling. Rama, the central and the hero of the epic, is believed to be the seventh incarnation of God Vishnu. Sita, the adored wife of Rama and the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu, follows Rama into exile but is abducted by Ravana. From this point the epic narrates Rama's war with Ravana for the release of Sita. Ravana is the powerful king of Lanka. He is a *rakshasa* described as having ten heads and twenty arms. He received a boon from Parameshwara that he couldn't be killed by Gods, demons, or spirits. This boon did not include the human being. Ravana abducted Sita with the help of the rakshasa Maricha and carried her to Lanka. In the ensuing battle, Ravana was killed by Rama.

The *Mahabharata* is also a superb epic and holds a supreme position among all such works in world literature. The subject-matter of the *Mahabharata* is a vast one. It incorporates all activities of human life. The purpose of the composition of the *Mahabharata* to awaken the spirit of purity in thought. It is also very long poem. It is said that the *Mahabharata* must have passed through three stages of developments, before it assumed its present shape. In the first stage the epic had a little over 8000 verses; in the second stage it had 24000 verses and in the third stage it had one lakh verses. Vyasa, author of the *Mahabharata*, was not only a great poet but also a religious prophet and a social reformer. The language used in the epic is also very ornamental.

**Q. 5. How many books (*parvas*) constitute the *Mahabharata* and how many the *Ramayana*?**

**Ans.** The *Mahabharata* has eighteen *Parvas* (books). They are: