

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE VISION OF CHARACTERS, DEVAVRATA IN RAJAGOPALACHARI'S MAHABHARATA, AND GANDALF IN TOLKIEN'S THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

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ABSTRACT

This study intends to discover the similarities and differences between C.Rajagopalachari's Mahabharata and J.R.R Tolkien's The Lord of The Rings. The writer uses American Comparative study as a method of study to find the similarities between the characters of both stories, and as an approach and theory to reveal the relationship between characters. This study will observe the characters and plots and find the differences and the similarities between the visions of the characters. Some of events and characters in Mahabharata are not only interesting but also giving many moral lessons for us. On the other hand, The Lord of The Rings is telling about a journey of a group of friends to destroy the ring which will give the wielder strong power to control another ring. Gandalf as the leader of the group becomes an interesting object to study as well as Devavrata in Mahabharata. Besides, literary work can become the portrayal of the culture and the development of culture, because every literary work will get some affection from their culture. Mahabharata and The Lord of The Rings were written by different authors and different culture as well. Even if both of the stories have different authors, it would not guarantee that both of them did not have similarities. The study finds that cultural gap between both authors cannot guarantee that both of the stories are absolutely different. Both Devavrata and Gandalf suffer from reincarnation experience, both of them like to give some helps for people around them, both of them get the roles as leaders of their group. By knowing the similarities and differences from the vision of characters, the readers will have a clue to understand the differences and similarities about west and east vision of life.

Keywords: Dharma; Karma; Kshatriya; Reincarnation; Resurrection; Vision

1. Introduction

This study aims to reveal the similarities and differences between Devavrata in Rajagopalachari's Mahabharata and Gandalf in Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings*. Mahabharata is an epic story of the Sanskrit epics of ancient India rewritten by many authors, one of them is C. Rajagopalachari. Mahabharata tells a story about the power struggle between two brother alliances which leads to the occurrence of the war. Some of events and characters in Mahabharata are not only interesting but also giving many moral lessons for us. Bharata Yudha is another name for Mahabharata in Javanese pewayangan. On the other hand, *The Lord of the Rings* is an epic fantasy written by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. *The Lord of The Rings* is telling about a journey of a group of friends to destroy the ring which will give the wielder strong power to control another ring. There are hundreds of characters found in *The Lord of The Rings*, one of them is Gandalf. Gandalf as the leader of the group becomes an interesting object to study. *The Lord of The Rings* consists of three parts: *The Fellowship of The Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of The King*. This study is analyzing *The Two Towers* that tells about an effort of Gandalf and his alliance to fight against Sauron and Saruman's alliance. Gandalf is a powerful and wise wizard of Istari which have a quest to aid the people to fight the evil. He can manage to get back to life after his death with Balrog.

Meanwhile, Mahabharata which is fairly known by the readers, has many characters and many conflicts that can steal the reader's desire to read. Devavrata is one of the characters in Mahabharata who is powerful and can almost be hardly beaten in every battle, becomes a leading character in this story. Devavrata is the incarnation of vasu and the eighth son of Kuru king, Shantanu. Devavrata is devoting his life to serve the Kuru king and has promised not to take the throne that makes him become glorious and be respected by people in Hastinapura. He is a master in the art of war and Dharma. He is a grand uncle of both Kuravas and Pandavas. He owned another name he got after his tremendous vow, Bhishma. Not only the characters, both stories also have some interesting objects to study such as their settings and

plots. Literary work can become the portrayal of the culture and the development of culture, because every literary work will get some affection from their culture. *Mahabharata* and *The Lord of The Rings* were written by different authors and different culture as well, even if both of the stories have different authors, it would not guarantee that both of the stories did not have similarities. The cultural gap between both authors cannot guarantee that both of the stories are absolutely different. Devavrata as one of the prominent characters in *Mahabharata*, and Gandalf which is also a prominent one in *The Lord of The Rings*, and were written in different books and by different authors become interesting objects to analyze. Tolkien has so many achievements for his amazing works. He gets so many awards such as, New York Herald Tribune Children's Spring Book Festival Award for 1938's *The Hobbit*; the 1957 International Fantasy Award for LOTR; and the World Science Fiction Convention Gandalf Grand Master Award, 1974. Like Tolkien, C.Rajagopalachari also has so many achievements from his writing, one of them is Sahitya Akademi Awards. His consistency to introduce Indian Literature, especially Indian myths to the world makes him detailly characterize each character in *Mahabharata*.

This study will try to discover the similarities and differences in vision of life between Devavrata and Gandalf. Comparative literature believes that as literary work is borderless and has relationship with other literary works around the world. In this study the writer will use comparative literature as a method, approach, and theory to analyze the issue. Comparative literature will help us to understand the relationship between both literary works. There are three prominent types of comparative study; French school, German school, and American school. "French comparative literature tended more towards the study of product of the human mind, whereas German comparists were more concerned with the 'roots' or 'spirit' of nation" (Bassnet 25). Different from two types of comparative literature which concern on language and culture of the texts, American literature concerns about the interdisciplinary and universalism of texts. Bassnett explains, the American perspective on comparative literature is based on the ideas of interdisciplinarity and universalism (33). Comparative literature is an international and borderless study about literary works all around the world. American school gathers some manifestations in the creation of literary work. American school has two fields for comparative literature, Parallelism and Intertextuality. In this study the writer intends to use Intertextuality for analyzing the object of study. M. Enani in his *Theories of Comparative Literature*, explains that intextuality is the relation between two or more texts which may affects the ways of reading the text (43). Intertextuality believes that every sign will have relationship with other signs, therefore, every literary work also has relationship with others. This study intends to use American Comparative literature supported by Intertextual as main theory and method since American Comparative literature gives more space for the researcher to do a study from many perspectives.

This study will mostly discuss about the differences and similarities between hero concepts and *Kshatriya* concepts. Hero concept is a bit complicated concept to understand. There are several thesis and journals as a consideration for understanding hero concept. There are a bunch of analysis about both stories, but there are only 3 that are relevant with this study; Michaela Krejová's *Unlikely heroes in The Lord of the Rings*, Tutta Kesti's *Heroes of Middle-Earth: J. Campbell's Monomyth in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (1954-1955)*, and Joseph Dowd's *Maximizing Dharma: Krishna's Consequentialism in the Mahabharata*. Krejová's research is analyzing about uncommon type of hero in *The Lord of The Rings*, Kesti's research tries to categorize characters, Heroes and Unheroes characters according to Campbell's theory, about monomyth or the hero journey. Dowd's research is analysing about the existence and application of *Dharma* in *Mahabharata*.

In this study the writer will analyze Gandalf's vision of life as a hero. Gandalf is not the main character but he has very dominant role in developing plot. Supported by Kesti's arguments that non main character or minor character can also become a hero (Kesti 10). A bit difference from the writer and Kesti's understanding about hero, Krejová argues "There are several types of heroes generally recognized in literature" (9). Hero is a vision of life which guides the characters to fulfill their life, in this point Gandalf's vision of life. Meanwhile, it is *kshatriya* that has a complex of meanings. *Kshatriya* as general meaning has the same meaning as a hero but *kshatriya* tends to has spiritual meaning and social status than just a hero. *Kshatriyas* must do *dharma* for their entire lives. The importance of doing *dharma* is also explained

by Dowd in his journal, that the most important thing for human is an adherence to *dharma* (Dowd 34). The same as hero as a vision of life, *kshatriya* also becomes a vision of life for Devavrata.

2. The Affection of Culture to Mahbharata and The Lord of The Rings.

Literary work can be considered as a product of culture. As cultural products, both *Mahbharata* and *The Lord of The Rings* got big affection from culture. Every literary work cannot cut the relationship with the culture. The affection of culture will absolutely affect the vision of life from both characters. Every literary work cannot cut the relationship with the culture.

Mahabharata is one of epic stories from India that contains many cultural and religious values. Indian culture contains some affection from historical events as well as religions, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, etc. Just like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* is also a prominent story in Hinduism. There are *Reincarnation*, *Dharma*, and *Karma*. Indian people, especially Hindus, believe that *reincarnation* is a natural cycle of life when *jiva* begins to enter the cycle of life; born, death, and reborn. Before entering *reincarnation* state, usually *jiva* will go to *karma* state in order to decide what form humans will get in their *reincarnation* according to their moral quality. *Dharma* is an important concept in Hinduism and Indian philosophies. *Dharma* is a moral and universal law which maintain the stability and harmony of the universe. *Dharma* is an abstract concept of law which concludes all aspects of life. *Karma* is not merely bad thing that happens in life, it is basically a cause and effect principle, a bit similar to Islam concept of *pahala* (reward).

The Lord of The Rings is a story inspired by Norse mythology. Not only does Norse mythology give affection, but culture as well. For some of Norse people, a journey to explore new place becomes an important need, tradition and hobby. There are many Norse sagas which tell about a journey or voyage of Norse heroes to other places, one of the sagas is *Greenland Saga*. In fact, *The Lord of The Rings* is also a story which tells about the journey of fellowship of the ring to Mordor, in order to destroy the evil ring, and just like *Ragnarök* mythology, *The Lord of The Rings* also contains so many wars against the evil.

3. Comparison of characters: Devavrata and Gandalf

Both Gandalf and Devavrata have great similarities which appear not only in their characterization but also in the plot of both stories. To understand the characters easily, the writer presents a simple table to describes the similarities of both characters.

Description	Devavrata	Gandalf
Back to life by	reincarnation	resurrection
Renowned because	wisdom and knowledge	wisdom and knowledge
Associated as	- a powerful <i>kshatriya</i> - a young man - an old man - mount a luminous silver chariot	- a powerful wizard - an old man - wearing luminous white robe
Role as	- grand advisor of Kuru king	- great counselor of Rohan king

Table 1. Similarities of Devabrata dan Gandalf.

Devabrata is a major character, while Gandalf is not, but they always come in every event in both stories. They always become the key roles for every important decision in the stories. Their existence in the story is important. They affect and support the main characters to accomplish their mission, Devavrata supports Yudhistira to accomplish his mission in *kurukshetra*, even though Devavrata is in Duryodhana's alliance, and Gandalf supports Frodo to accomplish his mission. Both of characters act as an enlightenment for their environment, they are great teachers who teach their fellows to follow the righteous path in their life.

Reincarnation process is different from resurrection one. For reincarnation victims, they firstly suffer from the process of *karma* before they come back to life. The process of *karma*, later on, will determine what they will become in their new life, that means their life will start from the very beginning, different from reincarnation, resurrection, even though the process to come back to life is a continuation of their previous life. This means that resurrection 'victim' will get their previous bodies, because their bodies are not dead and will continue their previous life. In contrast, reincarnation, process requires the death of the body and a full absence of soul in the body. The death experienced by Gandalf does not mean the death of his mortal body, but it is merely a temporary absence of the soul in his body. Therefore, even

though both Devavrata and Gandalf begin the story with the “back to life experience”, Devavrata surely begins his story as a new life, and Gandalf, on the contrary, just continues his previous life as an old wizard, even though after resurrection process, Gandalf changes to become “Gandalf The White”. Gandalf’s life seems more linear than Devavrata’s, because Gandalf in his resurrection does not need to resume his life from the beginning point, he just needs to end up his mission and previous life.

4. Devavrata and Gandalf’s vision of life

Vision of life is like a personal principle for every person, a personal principle which will affect to every human act. Vision of life is a personal ideal or vision to guide a person live. Vision of life gives a direction for human life, it is a guide humans to life in their ideal life or comfortable life. Sometimes people do something wrong that sometimes cannot be explained by logic and will make them feel uncomfortable and guilty. That feeling is a proof that they already violate their vision of life or their personal guidance. This also becomes a consideration for every decision that human made. For example, an honest merchant will give his best quality item for his costumer, this action made not just because he is an honest man but his mind prohibits him to cheat or to give a bad quality item for his costumer.

Both Devavrata and Gandalf are typical savior characters, they have capability to save people from the destruction, they both are wise and smart that was proven by bunch of their suggestion for what should their king do to solve the problem and to avoid destruction. Both of them also the typical trustworthy characters, they both granted an honor as the king personal advisor, their acts also prove that they are honest men. One of the examples of Devavrata’s acts that is related with the previous comments is,

Bhishma, wise with the ripe knowledge of right and wrong, replied: "The proper course will be to welcome them back and give them half the kingdom. The citizens of the state also desire such a settlement. This is the only way to maintain the dignity of our family. There is much loose talk not creditable to you about the fire incident at the wax house. All blame, even all suspicion, will be set at rest if you invite the Pandavas and hand over half kingdom to them. This is my advice." (*Mahabharata* 73).

And the act of Gandalf which can become a proof for the previous comments is his act to save his king from the destruction, and try to heal the king.

... He lifted his staff and pointed to a high window. There the darkness seemed to clear, and through the opening could be seen, high and far, a patch of shining sky... I bid you come out before your doors and look abroad. Too long have you sat in shadows and trusted to twisted tales and crooked promptings (TLTR 142)

There is a big gap in both of character their beliefs, Devavrata believes in *dharma*, and Gandalf believes in virtue, both of them will do something for the sake of goodness and virtue. They also always try to avoid conflict with other person, especially the bad one, they will try as hard as they can to convince bad person to come back to the goodness. That fact proved by several negotiation toward misguided or bad person is already made by both characters. Devavrata always try to negotiate with Duryodhana in order to get a better solution.

Bhishma turned to Duryodhana and continued: "Best of kings, Arjuna has come... Reflect a little before deciding on war. If you wish to make peace with the Pandavas, now is the time for it. What do you seek, a just and honorable peace or a mutually destructive war? Ponder well and make your choice." (*Mahabharata* 193).

Again and again Devavrata tries to convince his king to avoid the war. On the other hand, Gandalf also tries to convince Saruman to leave the bad side and go to the good side to get a better life.

‘I did not give you leave to go,’ said Gandalf sternly. ‘I have not finished. You have become a fool, Saruman, and yet pitiable. You might still have turned away from folly and evil, and have been of service. But you choose to stay and gnaw the ends of your old plots. Stay then! But I warn you, you will not easily come out again. Not unless the dark hands of the East stretch out to take you. Saruman!’ he cried, and his voice grew in power and authority. (TLTR: TTT 234)

Basically, Devavrata has more consideration for every action than Gandalf. Devavrata is a character who is always bounded by the rule of *kshatriya*, different from Gandalf, who can freely do what he wants to. Devavrata should always remember and make *kshatriya* role as his consideration before taking an act

or deciding a decision. For example, his act to fulfill his tremendous vow, even though he knows that if he does, he will be placed at a bad spot; another example is his act to avoid a battle with Shikandin, which later on leads him to his end. Devavrata's bound also come from his concerns toward his descendents' future, he is a type of character who loves and takes care of his family. In some cases, Devavrata can also become the factor for the existence of *kurukshetra* war, a war between Pandavas and Kuravas. His love towards his grandchildren makes him blind and cannot firmly guide his grandchildren. A good example for this fact is the holding of dice game in Kuru kingdom. In that event, he already knows that whoever the winner, the result is always bad things. Bhishma, Vidura, and Dhritarashtra were seated there. They knew that the game would end viciously...(*Mahabharata* 100). Too many considerations make

Devavrata become a powerless elder. If he takes a less consideration he absolutely will lead his grandchildren to a better end, and the end of *kurukshetra* war is different from Devavrata's expectation. That is why, the end is bad. Different from Devavrata, Gandalf gets a better end as his accomplishment to convince people to destroy the evil power, the ring!

5. Conclusion

This study shows that there are some similarities and differences between the vision of life of the characters, Devavrata in *Mahabharata*, and Gandalf in *The Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers*. The cultural gap between both authors cannot guarantee that both of the stories are absolutely different. This study proves that even if both stories have different authors and cultural backgrounds, they have the relationship and similarities. There are some similarities such as characters' journeys, the existence and belief in reincarnation, and the importance to help other people. Both Devavrata and Gandalf are suffers from reincarnation experience, both of them like to give some helps to people around them, both of them get the roles as a leader of their group. Even if there are some similarities, the differences between both stories cannot be avoided. There are some differences such as, Life for fulfilling the *karma* versus Life for doing some virtues, and *kshatriya* ideals versus hero ideals. Devavrata who believes in *karma* and *kshatriya*, develops his virtues and helps in a different way than Gandalf who simply wants to help people around him. Devavrata spends his life for his belief of *kshatriya* rules and *karma*. On the other hand, Gandalf spends his life to fulfill his quests to help people. The differences in cultural background cannot obstruct the probability of a literary work to have relationships with other literary works in different countries and culture.

In the end, the comparison between Devavrata and Gandalf will encourage the reader's knowledge and inspire them to make some studies about a comparison of two or more stories.

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