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# **EUROPEAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE**

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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

EUROPEAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE **B.E.G.C.-102**

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

**Note:** There are **three** sections in this paper, A, B, and C. Attempt questions from all the **three** sections. In section A attempt any **four**; Section B any **two** and in section C attempt any **three**.

## SECTION-A

**Q. 1. Do not ask me to sit down, beloved of Zeus, replied the aged king, while Hector's corpse lies neglected by the huts, but give him back to me swiftly so my eyes can gaze on him, and accept the ransom, the princely ransom, I bring'.**

**Ans. Context:** These lines are taken from *The Illiad* by Homer.

**Explanation:** Zeus wakes and sees the havoc that Hera and Poseidon have wreaked while he dozed in his enchanted sleep. Hera tries to blame Poseidon, but Zeus comforts her by making clear that he has no personal interest in a Trojan victory over the Achaeans. He tells her that he will again come to their aid, but that Troy is still fated to fall and that Hector will die after he kills Patroclus. He then asks Hera to summon Iris and Apollo. Iris goes to order Poseidon to leave the battlefield, which Poseidon reluctantly agrees to do, while Apollo seeks out Hector and fills him and his comrades with fresh strength. Hector leads a charge against the Achaeans, and while their leaders initially hold their ground, they retreat in terror when Apollo himself enters the battle. Apollo covers over the trench in front of the Greek fortifications, allowing the Trojans to beat down the ramparts once again.

### Q. 2. Anagnorisis

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 34, 'Anagnorisis'.

**Q. 3. "What expiation means he? What's amiss? Banishment, or the shedding blood for blood. This stain of blood makes shipwreck of our state."**

**Ans. Context:** These lines are taken from *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles.

**Explanation:** Laius, King of Thebes, an oracle foretold that the child born to him by his queen Jocasta would slay his father and wed his mother. So when in time a son was born the infant's feet were riveted together and he was left to die on Mount Cithaeron.

But a shepherd found the babe and tended him, and delivered him to another shepherd who took him to his master, the King of Corinth. Polybus being childless adopted the boy, who grew up believing that he was indeed the King's son. Afterwards doubting his parentage he inquired of the Delphic god and heard himself the word declared before to Laius. Wherefore he fled from what he deemed his father's house and in his flight he encountered and unwillingly slew his father Laius. Arriving at Thebes he answered the riddle of the Sphinx and the grateful Thebans made their deliverer king. So he reigned in the room of Laius, and espoused the widowed queen. Children were born to them and Thebes prospered under his rule, but again a grievous plague fell upon the city. Again the oracle was consulted and it bade them purge themselves of blood-guiltiness. Oedipus denounces the crime of which he is unaware, and undertakes to track out the criminal. Step by step it is brought home to him that he is the man. The closing scene reveals Jocasta slain by her own hand and Oedipus blinded by his own act and praying for death or exile.

**Q. 4. "Disappeared without an explanation. Now he snubs me**

**Just because I want to be his friend. How typical – When a rich man tries befriending someone less well-off**

**The poor shirk back in fear and fearfully object, But when the chance has passed them by too late they have a change of heart."**

**Ans. Context:** These lines are taken from *Pot of Gold I* by Plautus.

**Explanation:** "The Pot of Gold" is a play where the main motives are greed, cheapness and gold. The theme is Euclio's cheapness and greed for gold. The play is easy to read and the author makes fun of people's characteristics. There are four acts. Euclio is a poor man who finds the pot of gold and gets materialistic

richness with it but becomes poor in every other aspects of his life. He only thought about his gold. Phaedria is his daughter and she loves Lyconides. Megadorus is his uncle and he wants to marry Phaedria because he wants to settle down but in the end he gives up on that idea. Lyconides out of love for Phaedria gives up his inheritance just to be with Phaedria who is pregnant with his child. In the introduction Euclio found the gold and hid it, in the twist Megadorus wants to marry Phaedria, then the pot of gold disappears and in the end Euclio gets his pot of gold and Lyconides gets Phaedria. The play begins with a monologue by Euclio's household deity. He tells us that Euclio's grandfather once entrusted him with the guardianship of a pot of gold. The god has protected the secret of the pot of gold until now. He chooses to reveal the location of the treasure to Euclio because of the latter's daughter, Phaedria.

**Q. 5. "When my good father taught me to be goods, Scarecrows he took of living flesh and blood. And these, J. smear, if man such pledge may give, My pen and heart shall keep from, while I live."**

**Ans. Context:** These lines are taken from *Satire 1:4* by Horace.

**Explanation:** The reputation of satirists is someone who exposes the follies of everyone, including their close friends. His reputation as a good satirist is closely tied to his good upbringing by his father. The speaker credits his father for setting a good example of living with. Here, his father's teachings are similar to philosophical teachings of Epicurean philosophy. His father would teach the young poet by example of others who lived with bad reputation. The father also stressed the importance of good education. In highlighting the role of his biological father, he distances himself from his literary father Lucilius whose satirical style he finds difficult to follow. Thus, warning by citing examples of others is the best method of teaching his father adopted.

**Q. 6. "Neptune, the God of the ocean, was shown on his feet and striking**

**The rugged rag with his great long trident, while sea-water gushed forth**

**Out of the cleft in the rock to establish his claim to the city."**

**Ans. Context:** These lines are taken from *Metamorphoses* by Ovid.

**Explanation:** Rather than worship Bacchus, the three daughters of Minyas weave, telling stories to pass the time. The first (unnamed) daughter tells a tale of forbidden love. Pyramus and Thisbe fall in love. Their fathers oppose the match, so they decide to run away together. Thisbe arrives first at their meeting place, but she flees when she sees a lioness approaching.

Pyramus finds the tracks of a lioness and Thisbe's shawl. Believing that Thisbe is dead, Pyramus thrusts his sword into his belly, killing himself. Thisbe returns, sees what has happened, and kills herself. Leucothoe, the second daughter, tells another love story. After being tipped off by the Sun, Vulcan catches his wife, Venus, having an affair with Mars. Furious at the Sun for gossiping to Vulcan, Venus makes him fall in love with Leucothoe. Leucothoe and the Sun have an affair. The Sun's wife, Clytie, finds out and tells Leucothoe's father what is going on. Leucothoe is buried alive and dies. The Sun turns her into frankincense, a plant.

#### SECTION-B

**Q. 7. Discuss the characteristics of an epic with reference to the *Iliad*.**

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

**Q. 8. Examine the role of fate and destiny in *Oedipus Rex*.**

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

**Q. 9. Write a detailed note on the Fescennine verse form.**

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

**Q. 10. Comment on the style of the Horatian satire.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-14, Page No. 117, Q. No. 14 and Page No. 113, Q. No. 8.

#### SECTION-C

**Q. 11. 'Tragedy, blends emotion and meaning'. Discuss with reference to the *Iliad*.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 30, 'Tragedy' and Page No. 32, 'Emotion and Meaning in Tragedy'.

**Q. 12. Illustrate the role of the three unities in *Oedipus Rex*.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-7, Page No. 48, 'Oedipus Rex: An Illustration of the Three Unities'.

**Q. 13. What were the implications of the marriage proposal in *Pot of Gold*.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-10, Page No. 79, 'The Marriage Proposal: Implication'.

**Q. 14. Discuss Horace's choice of tone in his satires.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-14, Page No. 115, Q. No. 12 and Page No. 111, 'Horace Satires'.

**Q. 15. Comment on the literary value of the *Metamorphoses* and explain how it has influenced later writers.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-16, Page No. 137, Q. No. 11 and Q. No. 12.

**Q. 16. Can *Oedipus Rex* be called a tragedy of all times? Why?**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 58, '*Oedipus Rex*, A Tragedy for All Times'.



# Sample Preview of The Chapter

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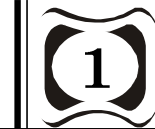


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## EUROPEAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

### 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*.

**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: