

## Amba's Quest for Home: A Case from *The Mahabharata*

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### Abstract

This article examines the myth of Amba from the perspective of hero's quest for home. According to *The Mahabharata*, Bhishma abducts Amba, one of the three maidens, for his half-brother Vichitravirya. After Bhishma abducts her, Amba finds her homeless. Shalva refuses to marry her, Bhishma denies going beyond his celibacy and her father also surrenders before Bhishma. In spite of his denial, Amba considers Bhishma an alternative to Shalva, with whom she could create a dream house. So, she agrees with Parasuram who intends to marry her with Bhishma. Similarly, she goes ahead in her journey and meets archetypal figures: Hotravahana, Parasuram, Ganga, and Shiva. Three of them remain helping hands to her while Ganga curses Amba. Amba goes on three phases of the Campbellian hero's journey: separation, initiation and return. Her separation is caused by Bhishma's kidnap, Shalva's refusal to adopt her and her father's inability to protect her. In her initiation phase, she goes through a series of transformation enabling her to fight against Bhishma. She only intends to defeat him for his misdeeds. Death is metaphorically extended to intensify defeat in the epic. Fire signifies positive action, passion, warmth and sexual prowess in the myth of Amba, where she enters. In other words, fire signifies home where one gets warmth, love and attachment. This paper basically answers three research questions. How does Amba become homeless? In what way does Amba get assistance from archetypal characters in her quest for home? How does Amba exploit her achievement for the transformation of the society? This reading exploits the Campbellian paradigm as the conceptual frame work and hermeneutic phenomenology as a theoretical one to explore the journey of Amba. It takes the myth of

Amba and Shikhandi as a whole not the separate ones. The story of Amba ends as Shikhandi gets killed in the epic.

**Keywords:** myth, archetypes, Campbellian paradigm, journey, homelessness

## 1. Introduction

Amba protests the action of Bhishma as the latter abducts them for Vichitravirya. After the denial of Shalva, she goes to Bhishma because she considers him an ideal husband, with whom she could create a dream house. Later on, she also agrees with Parasuram who intends to marry her with Bhishma. Amba goes on three phases of the Campbellian hero's journey. Her father's inability to protect her, Bhishma's kidnap and Shalva's refusal to adopt her collectively cause the Campbellian separation in her life. In the initiation phase, she goes through a series of transformations that empower her to fight against Bhishma. She only intends to defeat him for the sake of marriage. Defeat is metaphorically extended as death in the epic. The fire signifies positive action, passion, warmth and sexual prowess in the myth of Amba. In other words, it signifies home where one gets warmth, love and attachment. The transformation of Amba into Shikhandini depicts the rigorous physical training to attain masculine power so that she could take revenge with Bhishma. The mansion of Yaksha called Sthunakarna that was in the thick forest, was really the gym club or the physical training centre from where she got masculinity. Additionally, her journey from Amba to Shikhandini and Shikhandini to Shikhandi is the archetypal model of transformation of the hero. In her initiation phase, Amba goes through series of transformation making her able to fight against Bhishma. She returns with the skill, masculinity and challenges patriarchal values.

## 2. Literature Review

This literature review focuses on the hero archetypes and the home quest of Amba. Moreover, it creates the framework to diagnose her action. It equally points out the transformation that Amba goes through. It also identifies Amba's rigorous preparation for the greater purpose. Similarly, it also investigates her enmity with Bhishma, Shalva and the king of Kanshi. It points out the heroic motivation and manifestation of Amba in spite of the denial of mainstream critics. In short, the current research trends interpret the various epic contexts through other perspectives but they have not properly addressed the narratives through hero archetype and the home quest.

Amba stays as one of the influential characters of the epic. The myth of Amba ties the crux of the main plot of the epic together. Some schools of interpretation regard Amba as the receptive character who is like the object in the hand of her male counterpart. She does not play a leading and central role in the narrative. They regard her weaker than Shalva, Bhishma and the king of Panchal. Regarding Amba a marginalized character in the epic, I Wayan Nuriarta and Renata Lusilaora Siringo Ringo (2022) assert:

Amba's marriage plan was a contest that was not based on love, especially in the view that Bhishma as the winner of the competition was a person who was Brahmacari or someone who will never get married. Amba as a prize for the competition was handed over to Wicitrawirya as his brother who had to marry the three daughters. The contest

process also proves that this story has positioned men as strong beings because only men are present as fighters. Meanwhile, women are positioned very weakly because women are placed only as recipients of decisions on the victory of men's battles. (Nuriarta, I Wayan and Renata Lusilaora Siringo Ringo "Amba" p. 41)

Amba really denies being an object in the hand of patriarchy. She possesses hero conscience. She refuses to be a prize in a competition but determines to show her leadership quality. She refuses the verdict of Bhishma because she has already chosen Shalva as her groom. She determines to punish Bhishma as the latter spoils her dream house. She demands the compensation from Bhishma because he spoils her affair with Shalva. Moreover, she demands Bhishma as her husband not his brother because it is he who won her not his brother. Additionally, she refuses the dominance of martial prowess to select the groom rather advocates the role of inter personal relation for the selection. This literature does not recognize the hero conscience in Amba. However, Amba really stands fully accountable for her life and denies being a puppet in the hand of male counterpart.

Amba regards Bhishma fully responsible for her rejected life. Shalva's denial is also the effect of Bhishma's action. She concludes that Bhishma is the main culprit as he refuses to marry her. She convinces Bhishma for the marriage because she regards his brother improper candidate for her. As Bhishma denies her proposal she intends to teach him a lesson. She plans to show the potential of a female. She does her best to make allies and meets different hermits to defeat Bhishma. Tracing the revenge motive of Amba, B. Ghosh (2016) argues:

Amba's penance and efforts are commendable, but her aim is damnable. Whatever she did was just for the rejection and insult. She considered Bhishma for her misfortune so she wanted to destroy Bhishma, for that she moved from door to door of different hermitage and the way she insisted Parasurama for killing Bhishma was highly remarkable. Her unfulfilled desire turned herself toward revenge though she had no power to kill or destroy Bhishma so she moved from one hermitage to another first but at last she realized that no one could help her to kill Bhishma. Her severe penance was actually her worshipping for power to kill Bhishma. Her boon by Lord Shiva was the achievement of power. Using this power, she reached at the summit of her revenge. (B. Ghosh, "Women" p. 31)

The literature magnifies revenge as the driving force for Amba since Bhishma spoils her dream house that she has been furnishing with Shalva. However, she is not fighting for revenge. She really fights for the rights of women. She fights for bringing transformation in the society. She avenges against Bhishma because he is the one who spoils her life, preplanned family life and the dream house. In short, he is the one who made her homeless. Homelessness is the problem of Amba not the revenge. She goes to Shalva and returns to Bhishma so that she could save herself from being homeless. Moreover, she does not have revenge rather demands social transformation where females are treated on the basis of equality and accountability with due respect.

Amba signifies female potentials. Although she could not act as radical as Draupadi, she becomes far more radical than Shakuntala. Although stereotypical women move according to

masculine preferences, Amba denies doing so. Patriarchy violently torments females in spite of their leadership quality. Amba stands as an instance of this practice. The more Amba strengthen her mission, the more it intensifies the valour of Bhishma. Consequently, she could not counter Bhishma directly because patriarchy could not tolerate a challenge from a female. That is why; Amba begs help from different ascetics. Focusing on the dual standard of the epic narrative, Janaki Shreedharan (2009) asserts: Amba's predicament becomes . . . a narrative prop paradoxically achieving the self-negating purposing of heightening the heroism of Bhishma as a man true to his vows, as a warrior who would not kill a woman in war. (p. 105) Although this literature takes Amba as the literary device to highlight the masculinity of Bhishma, she really manifests the hidden potential of the females. She justifies that females themselves possess heroic determination so that they could punish the culprit. In spite of the claim of this literature, Amba does not highlight the masculinity of Bhishma. She fights against the prejudicial patriarchal practices that make her homeless. Moreover, the myth of Amba teaches how ego, vanity and arrogance lead people to downfall.

Amba manifests her submissive traits while begging in front of Bhishma and Shalva. Being constantly victimized by patriarchal violence, she decides to punish the culprits. She wants to be passive wife no more rather wants to teach a lesson to patriarchy. She does not envy the grandeur of Bhishma. She determines to punish Bhishma because he makes her homeless spoiling her preplanned dream house and family life. Focusing on Amba's success on getting the boon from Lord Shiva, the article *Kurukshetra War: Battle for the Throne* (2019) states:

Shikhandi is the son of Draupad and the male reincarnation of Amba, the only daughter of the king of Kashya who did not marry Vichitravirya due to her love for the king of Shalva. Upon being rejected by the king of Shalva, she asks Bhishma to marry her. He refuses due to his celibacy and Shikhandi vows to kill him. After praying to the deity Lord Shiva for a long while, she is granted a boon (favour) that will allow her to reincarnate as a man who is capable of killing Bhishma. Thus Amba kills herself and is reborn as the skilled warrior Shikhandi. (p. 16)

Amba wants to punish Bhishma heavily because he makes her homeless. He spoils her dream of celebrating the family life. Patriarchy constantly victimizes her because Shalva rejects her, Bhishma does not marry her and her father could not protect her. Consequently, Amba manifests the female potential. Although this literature focuses on the boon she gets from Lord Shiva, it underestimates her rigorous heroic efforts that oblige the deity to grant her the boon. Her tough initiation deserves such supernatural aid.

Amba's objective is not to promote violence although she determines to challenge patriarchy. She begs helps from different ascetics because of knowing masculinity a must to transform the society. Moreover, femininity could not implement violence and ferocity. Consequently, the genital transformation becomes an obligation to Amba. Amba concludes that she could not counter Bhishma without achieving masculine and ferocious qualities. She knows that violence and aggression are the traits of male which can't be the domain of females. Focusing on the physical transformation of Amba, Helen Cederman (1987) argues:

Ultimately a genital transformation had to occur for her to function completely as a male.

Her transformation from female to male illuminates the subtle psychological and blatant social restrictions that each sex contains and Amba learnt that aggression and violence are more effective in male form. (p. 84-85)

Although the literature focuses on the physical transformation, Amba possesses psychological and mental motivations to succeed in her goal. If she had only physical transformation, she would not have achieved the objectives. This literature underestimates the heroic motivation of Amba that enables her to achieve the goal. The material and physical status has been extremely highlighted in the literature but the social and psychological dimensions have been ignored there. This literature only highlights the genital transformation the main tools to achieve the goals but forgets to recognize the intrinsic motivation to get success in life.

Amba glorifies female potential through her heroic motivation, action and achievement. Her radical ideas and extraordinary journey distinguish her from her sisters. Her deny to the suggestions of hermits of returning to Kanshi manifest her heroism. After returning to Panchal royal palace with the manhood exchanged with one of the Yakshya, she joined the mission of the Pandavas because she knew the pain of being homelessness very well. The new incarnation of Amba, Shikhandi, offers heroic sacrifice. He was not running away from the battle field rather gets heroic death because he dies for greater purpose. On the whole, I am looking at Amba through hero archetype because I want to find out how she gets her mission of getting a happy home fulfilled in order to enable the new researcher to decode such narratives through hero myth.

### 3. Research Gap

I Wayan Nuriarta and Renata Lusilaora Siringo Ringo regard Amba a marginalized character and a puppet in the hand of male counterpart. They do not recognize the hero conscience in her. However, she really stays accountable for her life and denies being a puppet. Likewise, B. Ghosh magnifies revenge as the driving force for Amba since Bhishma spoils her dream house that she is about to make with Shalva. She fights against him because he is the one who has made her homeless. Homelessness is the problem of Amba not the revenge. Amba demands social transformation where females get dignified position. Similarly, Janaki Shreedharan argues that *the Mahabharata* narrative takes Amba as the literary device to highlight the masculinity of Bhishma. However, she manifests the hidden potential of female beings. She proves feminine heroic determination for social transformation. She does not highlight the valour of Bhishma rather punishes the culprit who makes her homeless. Shalva, Bhishma and the king of Kanshi together contribute for the misery of Amba. Moreover, the myth of Amba teaches how ego, vanity and arrogance lead people to downfall. Likewise, the article *Kurukshetra War: Battle for the Throne* focuses on the boon that Amba gets from Lord Shiva but underestimates her efforts that oblige Lord Shiva to grant her the boon. She deserves such a supernatural boon because of her tough initiation and heroic action. She tries to punish Bhishma because he spoils her family life and makes her homeless. In the same way, Helen Cederman regards genital transformation the boosting factor for Amba to achieve her goal. He postulates that violence and aggression furnish the action of hero but he ignores to trace Amba's intrinsic motivation. In spite of the counter action of Bhishma, Shalva and

the king of Kanshi, Amba's heroic motivation and commitment enable her to find out a home of her own and the home of the Pandavas.

#### 4. Statements of the Problem

Despite Amba's manifestation of heroic conviction and heroic action which correlate the paradigm of Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the main stream academic circle does not look at her through the hero myth perspective. However, this study looks at her through the home quest lens which is a parameter of the hero myth. Amba goes through series of trials to find a home because Bhishma, Shalva and the king of Kanshi push her out from the home. After getting her home in the palace of king Draupad with the help of one of the Yakshya, Shikhandi joins the grand mission of the Pandavas so that he could assist them in their home quest.

#### 5. Thesis Statement

Amba stands an extraordinary female hero in *The Mahabharata* who quests for a home because Bhishma, Shalva and the king of Kanshi together make her homeless.

#### 6. Myths and Archetypes

Myths are the narratives that relate the heroic deeds of celestial and terrestrial heroes. A myth explains the collective human experiences and the phenomenon. Supernatural characters play leading role in divine myths, extraordinary human in legends and ordinary layman in folklores. Archetypes are innate and inherent patterns that are equally shared by animals and birds along with human being. Moreover, archetypes are primitive, primordial and original form. Love, quest and journey are the archetypal actions. Hero, villain, trickster, father and mother are the archetypal characters. The hero goes on journey with perpetual extension and qualitative changes because his route is spiral not a cyclical one.

Archetypes are the building blocks of myths. Death, birth, love and quest are the major archetypes. Moreover, a hero stands as the dominant archetype in the myths. Campbell postulates the underlying structural pattern of the hero in his monomyth. Similarly, myths and archetypes provide a structure to folklore, a novel and a cinema. The divine myths, legends and folktales together narrate the journey of a hero. A myth unveils the harmony between human and natural cyclic orders. It also reveals the extraordinary deeds of the celestial heroes and terrestrial humans. The hero fights for the sake of greater purpose and brings transformation in his society. Pointing out the interrelationship between human and nature in a myth, Joseph Campbell (2004) states:

. . . myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth. (p. 3)

According to Campbell both human and nature stay together in a myth. A human being goes ahead with the ups and downs in the nature. A myth also reflects the impact of the rain, draught and flood in human life. Both human and nature reflect the same rhythm because



they are the parts of the same superstructure. A myth remains as meaningful to the people of the technological world as they were to the primitive people because of its trans-cultural significance.

The archetypal characters strongly affect the hero's journey. The hero faces lots of challenges throughout his journey. A mentor helps the hero on his journey while a shape shifter and a shadowy villain demotivate him. A herald, a mentor and a wise old man stand as the helping hands while a threshold guardian, a shape shifter, and a trickster contribute for the antagonistic force. However, a hero archetype, a mother archetype and a father archetype manifest specific motives. Consequently, they stay distinctive to each other. Tracing the representative archetypal characters, Christopher Vogler (1998) explains:

As soon as you enter the world of fairy tales and myths, you become aware of recurring character types and relationships: questing heroes, heralds who call them to adventure, wise old men and women who give them magical gifts, threshold guardians who seem to block their way, shape shifting fellow travelers who confuse and dazzle them, shadowy villains who try to destroy them, tricksters who upset the status quo and provide comic relief. (p. 23)

These archetypal figures shade their specific significances in the quest of the hero. Both helps and disturbances emerge in the journey simultaneously. These two types of forces enlarge the knowledge of the hero. Friends and well-wishers empower the hero in his mission while foes demotivate him. These archetypal characters manifest social diversity because diversified people formulate the society. In short, these archetypal characters equally generate social diversity.

A myth defines a phenomenon that is commonly shared. Archetypes stay as the building block of a myth. A myth is evolutionary in nature and perpetually transforms within its underlying pattern. Jung argues that archetypes are the collective phenomenon of human psyche ("The Archetypes" p. 4). On the other hand, Campbell explains the hero's journey as a type of archetypal journey which is organized in separation, initiation and return (p. 28). The hero goes through constant transformation as he steps from one phase to another. His route is not cyclical rather than spiral one.

## **7. Campbellian Paradigm**

Campbellian paradigm is a narrative structure. It is the fundamental pattern of stories exploited throughout the globe. Campbell calls this globally shared pattern the monomyth. It is the skeleton of the myths. Carl Gustav Jung also claims that these fundamental patterns stay at the heart of human psychology and cultural practices. These paradigms are the timeless frame of heroic adventure. Campbellian paradigm, the monomyth, which is the framework of narrative structure, focuses on commonality in myth across cultures. However, the monomyth underestimates the unique qualities of individual stories. It ignores the diversity found in cultural contexts. It only deals with the male centric data because it focuses on masculinity. It does not manifest female perspective. He magnifies structural dimensions but not the semantic side. The myth of Amba manifests the heroic female features that

Campbell underestimates.

Campbell extends the separation, initiation and return into seventeen steps in his monomyth. A hero initiates his journey as soon as he gets call to adventure. He crosses the threshold and enters into the unknown world. Series of tests and trials enable the hero for the final confrontation. Getting victory over the demonic forces, he returns to his world with the reward. He shares the achievement with his fellow people and takes initiatives for social transformation. The hero goes on perennial journey because he seeks solutions to newly emerging problems. Campbell's monomyth also signifies the evolutionary appetite of human being. The more he finds knowledge the more he needs. He tries to find out a solution as soon as he finds a problem. Postulating the underlying pattern of the monomyth, Joseph Campbell (2004) asserts:

The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth. The hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (p. 28)

Both the material gain and psychological enlightening cause the qualitative transformation in the hero. The spiral route of the hero goes on constant extension. As Amba goes away from Shalwa, Bhishma and even away from her father, she enters into unexplored zone. She goes through different trials that push her to enter into the pyre. Although she does not get help from some people, she gets a boon from Lord Shiva. Parasuram and Lord Shiva reinforce her while the Ganga curses her. Both boon and curse constantly bring changes in the Amba.

Campbellian hero plays with unknown, unexplored because he is the harbinger of social evolution. He explores new land and empowers his fellow people. The mission of the hero is to bring happiness, comfort and enlightenment for the fellow people. Death does not count in front of his heroic objectives. In his monomyth Campbell marginalizes the female. He could not stand inclusive and collective in it. He gives extreme priority to masculine traits. The myth of Amba highlights the loopholes of Campbellian monomyth. Amba must have possessed masculine martial potential because female warrior could not counter Bhishma. In short, the East has already acknowledged the potential of the female which is justified through their narratives.

## 8. Hero Archetypes

Carl Gustav Jung postulates ego as the dominant archetypes in his *Archetypes and the Collective Unconsciousness*. Ego always stays conscious towards himself and his surroundings. Later on, Joseph Campbell extends this Jungian ego into hero archetype in his monomyth. A hero stays distinctive from his fellow people because he has quite different perspective to look at his surroundings. The ordinary values for the others appear special and mandatory for the hero. Consequently, he addresses the call to adventure while the other could not identify it. Moreover, he offers leadership to his society. He rises as the harbinger



of the social transformation. That is why; he looks for the solution to the problem his society suffers from.

The hero overcomes the challenges because he possesses heroic skills. The hero plays with dangers because he is the embodiment of extraordinary traits. He goes on a fabulous journey and defeats the demons through his supernatural skills. His extraordinary action outsmarts the ordinary laws of nature. He exploits his miraculous potentials as he leaves his ordinary world. The hero manifests the tasks which are impossible to ordinary human beings. Explaining the extraordinary move of the hero, Northrop Frye (1957) postulates:

. . . the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established. (p. 33)

The supernatural agent supports the hero in the unknown world. He meets mysterious guides and gets magical weapons. He brings extraordinary achievement and exploits it on his homecoming. Although the world of the author goes on constant transformation, he keeps the validity of his achievement intact and exploits it for the betterment of his society. His extraordinary skills and actions defeat all types of difficulties. His miraculous action brings different ingredients of the narrative together.

The hero brings transformation in his life and in the life of his fellow people through his achievement. Quests and achievements constantly appear in the life of the hero. The confrontation with antagonistic forces also grooms the defensive strength of the hero. This confrontation brings qualitative changes in the life of the hero. Knowledge, spiritual insight, and enlightenment manifested in the hero, unveil the maturity of the hero. His achievement also empowers his fellow people as he shares it with his fellow people. Tracing multiple dimensions of the heroic quest and enlightenment, Susan Mackey-Kallis (2001) argues:

This journey moves the individual out from known territory (the parochial/the home/ego-consciousness) to unknown territory (often a descent into strange or terrible lands/ unconsciousness) where the individual is sometimes aided (mentors/gods/shamans/dreams), and is often sorely tested (demons/Shadow-self), in a search for a treasure or boon (gold/grail/enlightenment/individuation) that the individual then shares with the culture upon returning home (cultural enlightenment/ awareness of the undivided nature of being/ transconsciousness). (p. 13)

Both human being and his society go on constant transformation. Human being explores unexplored areas and finds innovative achievements. Even the hero rises extraordinary while his fellow people stay ordinary. He has heroic conscience that distinguishes him from the rest. He thinks different, he acts different and leads the society differently. As the hero confronts challenges, his limited perception gets extended. Amba in *The Mahabharata* goes on constant transformation as soon as she becomes homeless. She also gets extraordinary transformation

as she jumps into the funeral pyre. She gets both physical and spiritual transformation.

Hero archetypes exist everywhere in the society where there is challenge. Even animal, birds and human beings deserve heroic dimensions. Hero is the one who gives the solution to the turmoil of the society while rest of the world only celebrates the solution. Hero exemplifies to recognize the problem and to celebrate the solution. He is distinctive because he carries more responsibility to his society. He makes himself ready to keep his life in risk because he works for greater purpose. He takes his fellow people as close as his relatives. Explaining the inevitability of the hero, Sophon Shadraconis (2013) claims:

The word hero has connotations with adversity, challenges, honor, strength and victory. . . . The hero's journey often seeks to bring order to disorder or make right situations that have gone wrong. Throughout the journey, knowledge and understanding is gained through the eyes of the hero. Heroes seem to have a supernatural talent to achieve set out goals and bend reality to their will. (p. 2)

The hero explores the unknown territory because he prefers innovation. He fights against anarchy and chaos. Consequently, he establishes order. He provides order and harmony in the society. Amba goes to the unexplored world as both Bhishma and Shalva deny marrying her. She gets fabulous assistance from different people and achieves miraculous transformation. As a whole, Amba gets an ideal home in the royal palace of Panchal after getting the sex exchanged with Sthunakarna. Additionally, she assists the Pandavs in their grand mission of the search for home.

The hero archetype is the character pattern who wages a journey, faces challenges and goes through personal transformation. Hero archetype focuses on the potential to face challenges. He learns from his experience and gets personal transformation and qualitative changes. Amba manifests courage, conviction and self-sacrifice. She does not like to stay as the puppet in the hands of male. Instead of being an object, she wages the crusade against patriarchy. Consequently, she stays as the illuminating icon in the Eastern myth. She is the one who successfully challenges the masculinity and manifests the female potential.

## **9. Homelessness and Quest for Home**

Homelessness also implies insecurity, loss of individual identity and absence of community. People quest for home because they need safety, ownership and stability. They quest for home since a home gives reconnection to the society. It also reestablishes relationship to their community. Home does not always signify a physical shelter but also represents the sense of collective identity, belonging and stability. Homeless people wage tough journeys to find out a home. Although a physical home provides protection, safety and shelter to its members, a psychological significance of a home manifests psychological connectivity, individual and collective dignity as well as mental peace.

As people go to new land for opportunities and services, they lose their home and become homeless. They have no connection with the cultural heritage of the new land. When the homeless ones come back to their home, they could not find their society as it was when they left it. The people of their homeland maintain certain type of distance with these returnees.

They could not become absolute insider but ambivalent insiders because the people of their native land could not fully accept these returnees on their home coming. Focusing on the multiple dimensions of homelessness, Ruth Behar (2009) asserts:

Leaving home to go to an exotic land, a place with no ties to the anthropologist's life and heritage, is the classical scenario of anthropological displacement. . . . In the 1970s and 1980s, this paradigm was challenged by minority and diasporic anthropologists, who felt the urgency of returning to lost, abandoned, imagined, desired, denigrated or exiled homes and found themselves being ambivalent insiders, rather than absolute outsiders, in the societies that they examined. (p. 256)

Amba goes to completely terrific and unknown forest after being homeless. Although hermitages live there to perform penances, it is impossible for Amba to stay there. Consequently, they suggest her to go back to Panchal but she denies. She finds herself completely outsider in the jungle although Hotravahan introduces himself as her maternal grandfather. Moreover, she seeks a shelter even in the jungle to get rid of anthropological displacement. She does not trust even her own father because he could not protect her as Bhishma abducts her.

Homelessness is a perspective to look at the phenomena. Leaving home creates a problem since the home land people formulate a different perspective to look at him. One could not assimilate with his native people on his return because tangible and intangible practices oblige him stay homeless. A homeless one gets opportunity to look at the hidden motive of the people of his homeland as he comes back as a returnee. He finds them uncooperative who constantly keep distance with him on his return. Once a person leaves his homeland he always remains outsider from his native people. They face different social relations and recognize the world, society and himself in a different way. Tracing the tangible and intangible dimensions of homelessness, Anthony J. Steinbock (1994) argues:

. . . homelessness involves a fundamentally new way of looking at the world . . . . It provokes different ways of asking questions; it creates new problems and new diagnostic techniques, delineating unique measures of approbation and punishment. For example, "homelessness" implies a "state of being" for which one is not responsible, at least not in the same way as a derelict, a hobo, a 'false Egyptian' or a bum is judged to be. It conveys more a style of victimization which includes women, children, men and even pets. . . . homelessness invokes a novel web of social relations that both express and prescribe a unique understanding of the world and self-understanding. (p. 204)

Amba finds herself in a completely new situation. She does not know how to move ahead. That is why, she begs suggestions from the hermits. She does not deny as Parasuram advices her to marry Bhishma. She even does not know whether it is justifiable to have conjugal life with Bhishma. However, she takes all of them as the helping hands for her mission. She does not deserve such a heavy punishment. She does not willingly participate in the wedding ceremony. She has been there only for the formality announced by her father. She further knows that human being has unique thread of social relations and he reads the world and

himself through his individual insight.

People leave their home because of two reasons; it may be because of the oppression of the ruler. At the same time, people leave their homeland to find out better opportunity. The more they try to settle, the more they feel home sick. Although they make material gain there, they do not find their native home there. A home is not an object rather an experience, an attachment and an oneness. Although people think homelessness is related to American immigrants, every society reflect the essence of this problem through their myths. Human being has seen a long practice of making a home, snatching a home from other since the dawn of the civilization. Pointing out the two factors that contribute homelessness, Susan Mackey-Kallis (2001) asserts:

The roots of the family home, however, are even more deeply embedded in the American immigrant experience. . . . Thus, all American immigrants, or their ancestors, were either forced to leave home . . . or chose to leave home in search of a better life. Home, therefore, was not something taken for granted, but was actively sought and often hard won. (p. 127)

King of Kanshi could not protect Amba, Bhishma regards her as the commodity and Shalva refuses to take her as a wife. All of them force her to be homeless. She aspires to defeat Bhishma so that he would not spoil others' dream house in upcoming days. The torment from being homeless gets solved at the end through her rigorous efforts. Her constant labour finds the boon from Lord Shiva that empowers her to fight against Bhishma. Bhishma makes her homeless but Lord Shiva, Sthunakarna and Kubera collectively solve her problem. Amba, the female action hero, becomes homeless and continuously seeks her home and ultimately finds it in her next life.

As Amba reaches to Kuru royal palace, she appeals for the justice but they could not address her problem. Instead of giving her justice, they send her out of the palace. Consequently, she goes to Shalva for reunion but he rejects her suspecting on her chastity. Amba suffers from series of displacements. Her paternal home is destroyed by the violent action of Bhishma. She again gets displaced as Shalva rejects her. For Amba getting a home means the assurance of social, economic and psychological protection. Amba quests for dignity and belongingness through a home. The more she appeals to solve her problem, the more she gets frustrated because no one could break the ice. Consequently, she has to extend her journey to meet her prime objective. Finally, the sense of being homeless energizes Amba to accelerate her home quest.

### **10. Amba's Fight against Homelessness**

Female unfriendly patriarchy victimizes Amba. Although the stereotypical women surrender to the patriarchy, the radical ones deny their dominancy. Consequently, the radical ones wage a tough journey to counter them. Amba recognizes the call to adventure so fights against them who make her homeless. Because of her heroic journey and home quest, she occupies a special position in the Eastern myth. She manifests rigorous preparation to meet her goal. Amba carries the same mission even in her succeeding birth. She really wants to establish

glorified female identity although some critics claim that her main motive is to avenge against Bhishma. She denies being a wife of a person whom she does not like and does not like to stay as a rejected girl. She finds her homeless that is the main motivating factor for Amba. She finds herself completely outsider in her surroundings. Amba wages a tough journey to find out the solution of her problem. Additionally, she needs a home that could provide her shelter, safety warmth and oneness.

Amba does not admit to be homeless for a long time. She constantly seeks the home. She specifies her actions and stands as the unique female hero. She does not like to remain as the rejected girl. She fights for the restoration of the values that have been spoiled by Bhishma, Shalva and King of Kanshi because all of them made her homeless. She becomes furious because they shatter her dream house. Consequently, she goes to the unknown zone and quests for a home. She makes a decent promise to teach them lessons who have wronged her. In spite of being a prehistoric narrative, the case of Amba manifests a significant issue. Tracing the way Amba grooms her heroic potential, B. Kalra, et al (2016) assert:

. . . Amba, performed severe penance to obtain a boon to be able to kill Bhishma, whom she felt had insulted her and spoilt her life. However, Bhishma was invincible and could not be felled by any man. Therefore, Amba was reborn as a girl Shikhandini, who later on exchanged her womanhood with Yaksha and returned as a man. Even so she was not fully accepted as being male and was derided for his sexual built. (p. 406)

Amba, the Campbellian hero archetype, goes on constant transformation. She gets call to adventure as Shalva refuses to marry her. She has a fabulous Campbellian initiation after the denial of her fiancé. She meets lots of helping hands to back up her mission. Bhishma stays more responsible for making her homeless although Bhishma, Shalva and Kanshi king spoil her life. In her initiation phase, Amba goes through severe penance so that she gets a boon from Lord Shiva. Both the entry into the pyre and the genital exchange are the tough initiation in Campbellian paradigm that Amba goes through.

Amba manifests heroic motivation who counters the male domination. She denies staying weak character rather prefers the radical role. She advocates woman's right in prehistoric society. Although critics argue that Amba demands the lost values, she does not only demand them but vindicates the preferential male practice. She does not only fight for the restoration of her position that has been spoiled. She really wants to establish female position in new pinnacle. She manifests not only her individual determination rather the collective female determination. She refuses the position of a rejected girl. In spite of admitting the position of a rejected girl, she demand equal rights and privileges of her male counter parts. Pointing out Amba's denial of being a rejected girl, V. I. Kalyanov (1977) postulates:

A different form of action is observed in the case of Princess Amba. She strives for the restitution of her character and fortune with perseverance and single-mindedness. Her justifiable indignation and her righteous vow are eloquent of the fact that she was not reconciled to her position as a rejected girl and of her determination to face the current hard struggle and future danger to her position. . . . Amba represents the general image of the woman which is much more ancient than the one represented by

Sita. (p. 168)

Amba possess a strong motivation to reverse the consequence of Bhishma's action. She denies carrying the status of a rejected girl, a social stigma. She intends to keep female safe from the potential attack from patriarchy in the future. Her only one objective is to use her case as a means to assure safety and protection to female in the patriarchal society. Although Bhishma takes Amba as a stereotypical woman, she rises extremely radical and revolutionary. She initially manifests her radical growth through the heroic response to the call to adventure. Additionally, she goes through rigorous preparation to avenge against Bhishma because he spoils her dream house.

Patriarchy denies Amba enjoying a husband, home and family. It completely makes her homeless. She exploits her heroic motivation because she does not like remaining homeless. Consequently, she wages a crusade and takes an immortal initiative for social transformation. She brings changes in the way of looking at female. Amba denies following the social practices that makes them homeless. Her individual conscience and heroic motivation stops her accepting Hastinapura as her ideal home. In the same way the prince of Shalva denies providing a home to Amba. Patriarchy regards her valueless as she comes out of Hastinapura. Focusing on the influences of patriarchy in furnishing Amba an extraordinary female hero, Helen Cederman (1987) argues:

Circumstances in Amba's life turned against her and she was unable to follow conventional dharma. Born a princess, she was then made homeless and husbandless and cut off from achieving traditional ideals of womanhood. Amba knew that conventional options were closed to her when her fiancé rejected her. She told him the truth was indestructible and righteous would be her protector. (p. 83-84)

Amba refuses to be a stereotypical woman because she denies carrying traditional female role. She does not tolerate the unjustified violence from male. She stays self-determinate that is why she refuses the suggestions of the hermitages. She denies the stereotypical role because she prefers radical changes in the society. She rises as the militant female because she needs violence to counter masculinity. Moreover, she is a militant woman rather than a reformist one since she denies gradual reformation. If she had followed traditional woman role she would have been a reformist.

Amba fights against homelessness, although some highlight her fight against patriarchy. If she had been fighting against patriarchy, she would not have taken assistance from Parasuram and manhood from Yakshya, Sthunakarna. She also gets the boon from male deity, Shiva. However, she does her best to find out a cozy home that could provide her safety, warmth and oneness. She engages in superhuman austerities on the bank of Yamuna to find out a home. She really uses the male characters as the tools to meet her mission. Parasuram, Lord Shiva, Sthunakarna and even the king of Dasharna collectively operate as the tools in the myth of Amba. Amba stands heroic because she denies stereotypical female role. She gives a radical response to the call to adventure. She has extraordinary motivation that is why she keeps the mission in tact even in her next birth. As soon as her own father and her fiancé do not protect her, Amba becomes homeless. Consequently, she wages a tough journey because she really



needs a home.

### 11. Research Tools

The three fundamental phases in hero's journey: separation, initiation and return are used as the research tools. Amba gets call to adventure as Bhishma abducts her from Kanshi. Bhishma rises as the herald who announces the adventurous journey of Amba. Bhishma causes Amba's separation from her ordinary life. As she leaves the city after the rejection from Bhishma and Shalva, she crosses the threshold and dives into the unknown zone. She does her best to teach a lesson to Bhishma. She gets a boon from Lord Shiva and enters into the pyre to get a new birth. She also exchanged her sex with Sthunakarna. As she gets her sex exchanged and returns to Panchal Royal Palace, she finds her home that had been destroyed by Bhishma. After returning to royal palace with manhood, Amba reached to the third phase 'Return' and joins the mission of the Pandavas for the transformation of the society. She participates in the crusade with the boon of Lord Shiva.

### 12. Research Questions

- 1) How does Amba become homeless?
- 2) In what way does Amba get assistance from archetypal characters in her quest for home?
- 3) How does Amba exploit her achievement for the transformation of the society?

### 13. Research Objectives

- 1) To point out call to adventure for Amba
- 2) To explore the supernatural aid in Amba's life
- 3) To measure Amba's back up for the quest of the Pandavas

### 14. Research Methodology

This research article exploits nonnumeric data and uses purposive (deliberate) sampling because it is a qualitative research. Carl Gustav Jung's *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* is used as the conceptual framework along with Joseph Campbell's monomyth *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The hero is the leading Jungian archetype. He goes on the three phased journey. He gets constantly transformed because of the innovative finding. Amba's journey that begins from the arrival of Bhishma to Shikhandi's active participation even in the post-Kurukshetra combat is exclusively discussed in this article. The Campbellian postulation: separation, initiation and return are used as the research tools. Campbell reinterprets the Jungian ego as hero archetype, which is always conscious about himself and his surroundings. Similarly, this article exploits hermeneutic phenomenology of Gadamer and Ricour as the theoretical framework. Gadamer's enabling prejudices and hermeneutic consciousness as well as Ricour's mimetic theory that integrates prefiguration, configuration and refiguration are used as the theoretical frame work. The large range of the epic characters is reduced into the representative one through Amba. Moreover, this article uses Bibek Debroy's digital edition, *The Mahabharata*, published by Penguin Books in 10 volumes as the

primary text.

### **15. Amba's Heroic Quest for the Dream House**

This section interprets Amba's quest on three phases. Amba's conscience of being homeless, her rigorous efforts to meet the goal and her support to the Pandavas for their home quest are the main issues raised in this discussion part. In other words, these three phases manifest the separation, initiation and return of Campbellian monomyth. Bhishma announces the call to adventure for Amba through the abduction. Shalva also joins in the mission of Bhishma through his denial of adopting her. Amba finds herself in the exile as her fiancé Shalva denies to acknowledge her. He pushes her into the unknown. She empowers herself a lot in the initiation phase so that she could help the Pandavas for their mission. Moreover, Bhishma initiates Amba's Campbellian departure that gets accelerated by Shalva. Amba's lamentation becomes intense as she finds Shalva uncooperative. However, she intends to teach them pro female potential. Both Amba's entry into the pyre and Shikhandi's achievement of masculinity belong to the Campbellian initiation. Getting manhood Shikhandi celebrates the cozy home. The assistance of Hotravahana, Parasuram, Lord Shiva, Sthunakarna and Kubera all come under the initiation phase. Additionally, Shikhandi returns with manhood, brings happiness in the family and exploits the achievement for the transformation of the society. The return is closely related to his duty for the sake of the Pandavas. Making alliance with the Pandavas, Shikhandi intends to bring transformation in the society.

### **16. The Complaint on being Homeless**

A home signifies shelter, safety and connectivity. It also provides comfort and familiarity since one feels relaxed and protected at home. A home also formulates one's identity because people grow and get socialization there. It equally reflects wholeness, harmony and peace. It unveils connection to people, place and events. A home also manifests tangible and intangible significance. Amba laments on being homeless. She does not have any revenge motive to anyone. She does not only fight against patriarchy rather quests for her home. She gets miraculous assistance from the male characters. The helps from Hotravahana, Parasuram, Lord Shiva, Sthunakarna and Kubera justify that Amba is fighting against them who have made her homeless. Although Bhishma, Shalva and the king of Kanshi make her homeless, Hotravahana, Parasuram, Lord Shiva, Sthunakarna and Kubera empower her in her quest. Moreover, the main problem of Amba is being homeless. Although patriarchy denies assuring her a home, she specifies her fight against them who push her out of her home. Amba needs protection, identity, harmony, social connectivity that a home can only provide.

Amba becomes conscious about the potential danger of being homeless as she finds herself in Hastinapura because she does not like to be a wife of Vichitravirya. She still wants to have a reunion with her fiancé Shalva. She seems certain that he will understand her obligation. Moreover, Amba believes that a home and a family are the mandatory components in the life of a person. She further begs Bhishma's permission to meet her fiancé with whom she has already promised to establish a dream house. Amba asserts that the royal palace of Hastinapura could not be the alternative to the royal palace of Shalva. Additionally, Amba advocates the significance of a house in front of Bhishma. Documenting Amba's argument on

a family and house in one's life *The Mahabharata* postulates:

In my mind, I had earlier chosen the lord of Shalva as my groom. Without this being known to my father, he had also chosen me in secret. I desire someone else. . . . O Bhishma! . . . how can you . . . make someone like that live in this household? . . . It is evident that King Shalva is waiting for me. . . . O brave one! We have heard that you are famous in this world for being truthful to your vows. (vol.5, sec.60, cha.834 (171))

Amba stands honest to her words so that she pleads Bhishma for the permission to go back to Shalva. She has strong motivation to celebrate a family life with her fiancé. Reminding the heroism of Bhishma, Amba expects a great generosity from him for her happiness. Although Amba does not spell the name of his half-brother, she denies marrying Vichitravirya. She unveils her extraordinary skill to convince the worrier to fulfill her mission. She convinces Bhishma because she is afraid of being homeless. Moreover, Amba regards Shalva as the one and only solution to her problem. She does her best to persuade Bhishma because she thinks that human life becomes incomplete without a happy family in an ideal home.

Amba creates a hierarchy between a violent action and harmonious move to Shalva. She refuses the traditional practice of regarding the female as the commodity. She further explains that peace, harmony and happiness are the fundamental ingredients for an ideal home. She finds neither happiness nor harmony in Hastinapura. Moreover, she regards Shalva as the driving force for her. She further adds that she could do nothing in front of the violence of Bhishma. She could not protest his violent action. Consequently, she followed him. She also warns Shalva as the latter refuses to acknowledge her as his fiancé and questions on her chastity. Additionally, Amba justifies her departure with Bhishma from the royal assembly of Kanshi. Documenting Amba's narrative about her own opinion on the violent action of Bhishma, *The Mahabharata* states:

I wasn't happy when I was abducted by Bhishma . . . . After driving away . . . he used force on me and I was weeping. O lord of Shalva! I love you. Love me back in return. I am an innocent maiden. Dharma does not approve of the abandoning of those who love you. . . . O lord of the earth! The mighty-armed Bhishma does not want me. . . . I have never desired any man other than you. . . . I swear on my head that I have not thought of anyone but you. . . . I have not gone to any other man earlier. . . . With tears in her eyes and with her voice choking with tears, she said, 'O lord of the earth! Having been discarded by you, I will go wherever I wish. I will go to the virtuous. It has been rightly said that where there is virtue, there is truth.' (vol.5, sec.60, cha.835 (172)).

Amba justifies her chastity to Shalva as the latter suspects her. She further explains her inability to counter the violence of Bhishma. She says that she has not the martial strength to counter his fearful action. Moreover, she manifests her emotional attachment to Shalva in spite of his reluctance. Additionally, all of these evidences manifest Amba's quest for an ideal home. At the end of the discussion, she regards him one of the culprits who makes her homeless. However, she manifests two dimensions of her identity. Initially she appears submissive and begs his help while at the end she rises up assertive one trying to find out the

solution herself.

Amba demonstrates her willingness to the call to adventure. Her father, Bhishma and Shalva announce her call to adventure together. She denies going to her father because he could not protect her in the time of emergency. She further says that a grown up child must seek her shelter on her own. She must go on the exploration to find her own territory. She disagrees on the suggestions of the hermits. She does not like to live the life of a rejected girl. Consequently, Amba refuses the suggestion of the hermits to go back to her father rather agrees to wage a tough journey. Tracing the heroic conviction of Amba manifested in front of the ascetics in the forest, *The Mahabharata* documents:

“Amba replied, ‘I cannot go again to my father’s residence in the city of Kashi. There is no doubt that I will be disrespected by my relatives. O ascetics! It was different when I dwelt in my father’s residence as a child. O fortunate ones! I will not go where my father is now. O foremost among brahmanas! I wish to practise austerities under the protection of ascetics, so that I do not confront great ill fortune, in this world or the next.’ (vol.5 sec.60 cha.837 (174))

Amba manifests her heroic determination in this extract. She stands extraordinary because she distinguishes herself from her two sisters. She equally manifests her moral and psychological strength as she denies the proposal of the ascetics. She prefers personal identity, gender equity and social recognition. Bhishma, Shalva and her own father stand against of her. All of these three males torment the hero conscience of Amba. She could neither live the life of a subordinate agent. Her heroic conscience and extraordinary motivation empower her quest. Consequently, she makes herself ready to explore the unknown.

Amba manifests her transformation from confusion to conclusion in her quest. Although she initially regards Bhishma, her own father and Shalva equally responsible to make her homeless, finally she asserts Bhishma the most responsible one for her plight. She finds herself completely desperate as Bhishma spoils her proposed family. However, the king of Kanshi did not ask the concern of his daughters. He imposed his decision on his daughters. On the other hand, Shalva could not trust in the narrative of his fiancé. In spite of understanding her obligation, Shalva doubts on her chastity. Pointing out Amba’s confusion and conclusion about her misery through her own words *The Mahabharata* asserts:

I have been treated badly by Shalva. . . . Will I blame myself or the unassailable Bhishma? Or should it be my foolish father who arranged for the svayamvara? Is it my own fault that I did not jump down from Bhishma’s chariot? When that terrible war raged on earlier, should I have descended and run away to Shalva? . . . Shame on Bhishma. Shame on my evil father, whose intelligence is foolish. . . . Shame on me. Shame on King Shalva. Shame on the creator. It is because of everyone’s bad sentiments that I now confront this calamity. . . . But Shantanu’s son, Bhishma, is the chief reason for my hardship. I see that I now have to exact vengeance on Bhishma, through austerities and fighting. . . . Having reflected in this way, she left the city. (vol.5, sec.60 cha.836 (173))

Amba believes that if her father had not included her in the Swyambara, she would not have been victimized. If Bhishma had kidnapped her for his own life, it would have been a different case. She denounces her coward father who could not save his daughters from the violence of Bhishma. She even denounces the creator. As a whole, she does not find her surrounding friendly to her. She rises up from her day to day life and intends to prove herself extraordinary. Her hero conscience gets raked by the violence so that she intends to manifest the female potential to the society. Although Amba articulates her fight against Bhishma, she implies that her fight is for the rights of the women and their position in the society.

Amba leaves the hermitages for the penance to fulfill her goal. Similarly, Shikhandi also goes to the deep forest to commit a suicide because of his marriage invites a disaster for his family. Shikhandi's entry into the forest of Kubera is the apotheosis. Shikhandi achieves divinity in the forest. This entry into the forest is the culmination of trials. If Shikhandi had not met Sthunakarna, he would have taken a suicide. Fortunately, the sex exchange empowers him to bring happiness in his family. Additionally, Shikhandi's quest in Kubera's forest enables him to give a shelter to the Pandavas during the Kurukshetra combat. Focusing on the heroic move of Shikhandi towards the forest of Kubera, *The Mahabharata* postulates:

The spirited maiden, Shikhandi, was overcome with grief at seeing them converse in this fashion and was filled with shame. She thought, 'It is because of me that both of them are suffering.' She made up her mind to kill herself.

“Having been overcome by terrible misery, she decided this and left the residence for the deep and deserted forest. (vol.5 sec.60 cha.855 (192))

In spite of the claim of the extract, Shikhandi really goes to the forest for the transform. The boon he gets there brings happiness in his family. This boon equally assists the Pandavas in their quest. Shikhandi finds the greatest treasure there that uplifts his personal and family life. The entry into the forest and the achievement extend the influence of Shikhandi's strength so that he could contribute for the mission of the Pandavas. Although unsuccessful conjugal life makes Shikhandi homeless, he does his best to find out a solution in the unknown forest. Fortunately, he achieves extraordinary boon that brings miracle in the society. Killing in the extract implies enlightenment, spiritual, psychological and moral maturity. It does not mean collapse and end of things.

Amba vindicates her love to Shalva in Hastinapura palace to reply Bhishma. She further attempts for recreating her home through her pleadings to Shalva. She keeps her heroic enthusiasm in tact denying the suggestion of the ascetics. However, she does not deviate from the objectives she has already fixed. Similarly, she gets shocked as she finds the patrons of the society responsible for her misery. She acknowledges her plight as the outcome of their collective efforts. Although the unhappy conjugal life leads Shikhandi towards the thick forest, the mission of his previous life still empowers him. Amba regards Bhishma mainly responsible for her misery because he announces the call to adventure for her through the abduction. Amba's situation becomes more complicated through the denial of Shalva. Additionally, Sthunakarna assures Shikhandi a cozy home. Through the manhood, Shikhandi brings happiness in the family. He contributes for social transformation making alliance with

the Pandavas. Moreover, Amba looks for a home because it provides her tangible and intangible connections. Being homeless she could not come in contact with the people and place that have crucial meaning in her life.

### 17. Rigorous Preparation to Meet the Goal

Amba's tough preparation continues even in her next life. She completes her initiation as she gets manhood in her new incarnation. In other words, the Campbellian return begins after getting the manhood. From this point Shikhandi brings transformation in the society. Happiness engulfs Panchaal and his parents feel safety. Likewise, Shikhandi enjoys the sound conjugal life and their country feels protected. Shikhandi exploits his achievement for the social upliftment. Consequently, he joins the mission of the Pandavas. Amba's discussions with the hermitages, her tough penances and entry into the pyre manifest the Campbellian initiation. Moreover, Shikhandi's learning under the guidance of Drona, the journey towards the thick forest of Kubera and meeting with Sthunakarna also unveils the initiation. All of these individual events groom the hero for his leadership to transform the society. Parasuram orders Bhishma to marry Amba. He has to confront Parasuram because he denies his command. Amba enters into the pyre because she has to fulfill her promise at any cost. After getting manhood, Shikhandi comes back to Panchal. He gets successfully rehabilitated. He does not feel homeless any more. Additionally, he joins in the mission of the Pandavas because he does not like them being homeless.

Amba regards Bhishma responsible for the denial of Shalva. Bhishma's abduction spoils the interpersonal networking that Amba enjoyed. He spoiled her harmony with Shalva and chased her away from the royal palace of Kanshi. However, she never stays a coward and hopeless rather possesses a heroic determination. Her motivation is not only to kill Bhishma rather to establish a prestigious recognition of female in the society. She denies the violence from male that spoils female self-esteem and makes them homeless. Tracing Amba's perception towards Bhishma's violent action, *The Mahabharata* postulates:

Bhishma, the one who is mighty in his vows, is the root cause of my hardship. He used force to overcome and abduct me. O mighty-armed one! Bhishma is the reason behind this unhappiness. Kill him. O tiger among the Bhrigu lineage! It is because of him that I am wandering around in this supreme misery. (vol.5 sec.60 cha.839 (176))”

Although Amba talks about her personal misery, it transcends personal boundary and rises as the collective concern of the female. She intends to liberate the females using her case as the tool. She asserts that the martial efficiency of Bhishma causes her unhappiness. He becomes violent in his action because of his martial strength. Amba stays clear in her mission. Moreover, she concludes that Bhishma deserves death because he has spoilt her dream house. Additionally, he deserves a capital punishment because he has committed a capital crime.

Parasuram stands one of the helping hands for Amba. He agrees that Bhishma spoils the career of Amba. He thinks that Bhishma imposes the socio-cultural stigmas on Amba. His misbehavior to Amba invites doubts on her chastity. Parasuram concludes that Bhishma's violent abduction makes Amba homeless. He thinks that the easiest way to solve the problem is



the marriage between them. Consequently, Parasuram raises his weapon and fights the decisive battle against Bhishma. Pointing out Parasuram's helpful effort to create a home for Amba, *The Mahabharata* asserts, "His eyes red with anger, Rama told me, 'O Bhishma! . . . Take her back and save yourself and your lineage. Since you have tainted her, she will not find a husband.' (vol.5 sec. 60 cha. 841(178))" Parasuram asserts that Bhishma has made Amba homeless, husbandless and without family. He commands Bhishma to marry Amba because of his accountability to her desperate situation. He further challenges Bhishma for fighting in case he denies. Parasuram believes that Bhishma's unwise abduction causes lots of consequences. One of such impacts is the doubt on her chastity. Although Bhishma keeps his honesty on his own oath, Amba's misery counts more to Parasuram because she loses the shelter.

Amba's meeting with Lord Shiva manifests Campbellian postulation atonement with father. Shiva gives a boon to Amba to avenge Bhishma only in the next birth. She gets enlightened through the boon of Shiva. Consequently, she does not like to waste her time wandering in the forest. She rises extremely truthful to Lord Shiva and makes her entry into the next life. She enters into the funeral pyre that she has made on the bank of the Yamuna. The fire on the bank of Yamuna metaphorically stands for the home which gives warmth, protection and happiness. Pointing out Amba's heroic initiative for her own holistic transformation to meet the goal, *The Mahabharata* states:

In the sight of those maharshis, the unblemished one, the one with the beautiful complexion, gathered wood from the forest. She constructed an extremely large funeral pyre and set fire to it. . . . When the fire was blazing, with rage igniting her senses, she said, 'This is for Bhishma's destruction.' O king! On the banks of the Yamuna, the eldest daughter of Kashi entered the fire.'" (vol.5 sec.60 cha. 851(188))

Amba takes Lord Shiva as her mentor because her meeting with Shiva brings a crucial turning in the journey of Amba. Shiva's suggestion and boon grooms Amba to achieve her goals. Her own strong motivation along with the boon from Lord Shiva enables her to enter into the pyre. Fire stands for the agent of transformation in the extract. It transforms Amba into Shikhandi. After entering into the pyre, Amba reaches to the family of King Draupad. The fire also transports her from the family of the king of Kanshi to the king of Panchal. Additionally, the fire energizes her for her long term mission. It helps to keep her heroic motivation intact. It guides her to explore the unknown.

Shikhandi's entry into the forest of Yakshya is nadir/ abysses because it is the fatal stage. Shikhandi actually goes there not to get manhood rather to have a suicide. His encounter with one of the Yakshyas shaves his life and brings charms into his gloomy life. He rises so hopeless because he regards himself accountable for the threats on Panchaal since Shikhandi's in- laws stay ready to attack on Panchaal for their deceit. Consequently, he goes to the thick forest to kill himself. Unexpectedly, he makes an extraordinary gain which leaves a long term effect not only in his family but also in the entire society. Pointing out the condition on which Shikhandi gets physical and mental transformation from Sthunakarna, *The Mahabharata* puts forward:

For a limited period of time, I will give you my male organ. But I tell you truthfully

that when that time is over, you must return to me. . . . Save your city and your relatives through my favours. O daughter of a king! I will bear your female organ. Promise me this and I will do what brings you pleasure.’ . . . Having become a man, Shikhandi from Panchala happily entered the city and went and met his father. He told Drupada everything, exactly as it had happened. On hearing this, Drupada was overcome with joy. Together with his wife, he remembered Maheshvara’s words. (vol.5 sec.60 cha.856 (193))

Sex exchange is the ultimate boon that Amba gets in her next birth. Although Kubera extends the time frame of the boon, it was initially handed by Sthunakarna. However, both Sthunakarna and Kubera stay accountable to make Amba’s journey a grand success. As Shikhandi returns to city with manhood, happiness engulfs the royal family. Amba, through the life of Shikhandi, justifies that a hero can achieve even impossible things. Although it is impossible for ordinary people, it is possible for the hero because the hero is extraordinary. Although Lord Shiva bestows this boon to Amba, it is only possible through the rigorous practice of the maiden. If Amba and Shikhandi were indolent in their deeds, the achievement would be impossible.

The sense of being homeless is the driving force for Amba. She wages a crusade against Bhishma because he spoils her dream house. Amba requests Parasuram to oblige Bhishma to marry her. That is why, Parasuram commands Bhishma to do so because he has uprooted her social life. Because of his violence it is difficult for Amba to adjust in the society. Consequently, Amba does her best to groom herself as a successful warrior. She understands the necessity of the martial proficiency to encounter the mainstream practice. She also knows that the martial proficiency and manhood are correlated. She has to get manhood to answer them. She enters into the pyre otherwise she has to wait long to achieve manhood. Amba jumps into the pyre on the bank of river Yamuna so that she could challenge the masculine martial violence of Bhishma. Amba prepares to get manhood throughout her initiation. The boon assists Shikhandi to bring happiness in the palace of Draupada, helps to meet his previous promise and backups the Pandavas in their quests.

### **18. Assistance to the Pandavas for their Home Quest**

Shikhandi assists the Pandavas for their grand quest. He provides a shelter to Arjuna for attacking Bhishma and gets a heroic death fighting on behalf of the Pandavas. He assists Arjuna to fulfill the promise of his previous life. As the Campbellian hero Shikhandi takes the initiative for social transformation and goes on constant exploration. Shikhandi stands as the reincarnation of Amba who constantly gets call to adventure. During the first phase of her life, Bhishma rises as the herald. As Shikhandi gets married with the daughter of Hiranyavarman, the King of Dasharna announces the call to adventure to Shikhandi. Consequently, Shikhandi goes to the thick forest for a suicide. Fortunately, he returns with manhood from the forest and brings happiness in the kingdom of Panchaal. Besides empowering his family, the manhood that Shikhandi gets from Sthunakarna, provides an extraordinary back up to the Pandavas. In his Campbellian return, Shikhandi brings happiness in Panchaal and in the life of the Pandavas.

The objective of killing Bhishma gets modified in the succeeding birth although Shikhandi had enmity with Bhishma in his previous birth. He provides a shelter to Arjuna to shoot him. After getting manhood from Sthunakarna, Shikhandi returns to the palace since he finds the home in Panchal. The objective of Amba gets achieved through the shooting of Arjuna. Shikhandi does not only fight for the misdeeds of Bhishma. His mission gets transformed into wider scale. He fights for a home to the Pandavas. Although Bhishma tries to extend the homelessness of the Pandavas, Shikhandi fights against their homelessness. Highlighting the fusion of cunning warfare strategy and skillful martial potential under the shelter of Shikhandi, *The Mahabharata* opines:

While he was speaking thus, Phalguna placed Shikhandi in the forefront of the battle and pierced Bhishma with sharp arrows. . . . He smiled and spoke to Duhshasana again. ‘These are like vajra and thunder to the touch. They are sharp at the tip and have been released well. They have been shot in a continuous stream. These cannot be Shikhandi’s arrows. . . . These are Arjuna’s arrows. . . . All the kings together cannot cause me any grief. The only exception is the brave Jishnu, the wielder of Gandiva and with the monkey on his banner.’ (vol. 5, sec. 64, cha.974 (114))

Shikhandi stands honest to his duty. He does not have any personal desire; he only gives punishment to Bhishma for the action he has performed. The injustice to Amba and Draupadi from Bhishma makes Shikhandi give shelter to Arjuna. Moreover, Shikhandi creates a counter to the dominance of Bhishma. He could not directly fight against Bhishma because the latter denies fighting against woman. Consequently, Shikhandi provides a distraction to Bhishma so that he could not defend the attack. Additionally, Shikhandi stands as the divine tool to defeat Bhishma. Defeating Bhishma through the arrows of Arjuna, Shikhandi ensures victory to the Pandavas so that they could get their home.

Shikhandi faces a hero’s death at the post Kurukshetra combat. He dies on the way of defending the Upa-Pandavas. He does not like the Pandavas staying as the outsiders in their own land. In spite of knowing the violent attack of Ashvosthama, Shikhandi manifests his real heroism during the night. He sacrifices his own life in the fight. Although he has already fulfilled his promise of killing Bhishma, he continues fighting for the greater purpose. He does not run away from the battlefield rather fights against the enemies. Narrating the way Shikhandi manifests his heroic commitment during the night time martial raid, *The Mahabharata* states:

Frightened by the noise and hearing that Dhrishtadyumna had been killed, Droupadi’s maharatha sons grasped bows in their hands. Without any fear, they countered Bharadvaja’s son with storms of arrows. The Prabhadrakas awoke. With loud roars, they and Shikhandi struck Drona’s son with arrows that possessed stone heads. . . . At this, Drona’s extremely powerful son was filled with great rage. He attacked Shikhandi and cut him down into two pieces with his sword. Having killed Shikhandi, the scorcher of enemies was enraged and powerfully attacked all the large numbers of Prabhadrakas. (vol.8, sec.78, cha.1291 (8))

Shikhandi represents self-sacrifice. He sacrifices for the greater purpose. He rises above the

personal glory. He knows the pain of being homeless so he assimilates with the Pandavas. Homelessness and the quest for home are the driving forces of Shikhandi. These things bring him closer to the Pandavas. Although the epic highlights Shikhandi's role on the downfall of Bhishma, his death is even more significant. Shikhandi deserves a heroic death because he aspires bringing transformation in Hastinapura. He fights against the injustice on the Pandavas. Additionally, Shikhandi grooms the destiny of Bhishma and the Pandavas. He causes the death of Bhishma and ensures the victory to the Pandavas. Shikhandi gets a heroic death for the protection of the Upa-Pandavas.

Shikhandi provides a shelter to the Pandavas. He rises as the patron to Arjuna and Krishna while confronting invincible warrior Bhishma. In spite of being the charioteer of Arjuna, Krishna could not assure safety to Arjuna. Consequently, they feel the need of Shikhandi to protect them during the fight against Bhishma. The invincible Bhishma could not be challenged otherwise. Shikhandi comes ahead of Krishna and Arjuna so that Bhishma gets distracted and becomes unable to defend himself. Fundamentally, his misdeeds to Amba and his inability to give justice to Draupadi collectively bring Shikhandi in front of Bhishma. Although the epic does not glorify the death of Shikhandi, he does achieve the heroic death. He rises above his personal interest and gains. Similarly, he fights for the justice to the Pandavas. He believes that Duryodhana has continuously made them homeless. During the safe guarding to the Upa- Pandavas, Shikhandi gets unexpected assault from Ashwosthama and sacrifices his life at night time.

Bhishma announces the call to adventure to Amba. Amba asks Bhishma's permission to leave Hastinapura because she feels homeless in Hastinapura. She feels safe in the company of Shalva. Returning from Hastinapura, she explains her inability to protest Bhishma although Shalva does not acknowledge her faithful love. Moreover, Amba does not obey the ascetics to go back to her father. Instead of going back she prefers exploring the unknown. Similarly, Amba also gets confused regarding the most accountable culprit for her misery. However, she finds Bhishma the most responsible. Similarly, Amba in her next birth finds her in laws as the heralds who announce the call to adventure. Amba goes through severe initiation. She makes a tough preparation to fulfill her mission. Amba regards Bhishma the cause of her misery so requests Parasuram to kill him. After analyzing the case of Amba, Parasuram commands Bhishma to marry her because he spoils her social recognition. Amba could not wait for a long time to celebrate the boon that she gets from Lord Shiva. Consequently, she enters into the pyre to get next birth. Even in her next birth Amba has to go through severe preparation. As a result, Shikhandi goes to the forest and gets manhood from Sthunakarna. This achievement brings happiness to the royal family of Panchal, fulfills the mission of Amba and ensures the victory to the Pandavas. Additionally, Shikhandi gives a shelter to Arjuna to shoot Bhishma because Bhishma protects those who have made the Pandavas homeless. Shikhandi sacrifices for the greater purpose. He does not have personal interest to fight against Ashwosthama. He has been protecting the real heir of Hastinapura. At such condition Shikhandi gets glorious death at the night.

## 19. Conclusion

Homelessness is the major problem from which Amba continuously suffers. As soon as she becomes homeless, her quest for the dream house becomes intense. The manhood of Sthunakarna enables Shikhandi to find home in the palace of king Draupad. After getting home in the palace, Shikhandi assists the Pandavas for their quest of home and gets the glorified death on the way. However, after getting her own house in her next birth, Amba devotes her whole life for the transformation of the society. Consequently, Shikhandi joins in the grand mission of the Pandavas. Bhishma announces the call to adventure for Amba. Shalva also participates on the announcement made by Bhishma. Both Shalva and Bhishma along with the king of Kanshi make Amba homeless. None of them protects her in the crucial turning. Bhishma refuses marrying her, Shalva questions on her chastity and her own father could not defend her as Bhishma abducts them. All of them make Amba run away from her own land to the unknown. Moreover, she extends her experience through her extraordinary journey. She meets different archetypal figures. Hotravahana, Parasuram, Ganga, Shiva, Sthunakarna and Kubera are the notable ones. All of them leave long term effect on Amba. Hotravahana, Parasuram, Shiva, Sthunakarna and Kubera remain helpful to her while Ganga curses her. Among them Lord Shiva and Sthunakarna stand extraordinary mentors throughout the journey of Amba.

Amba goes through the route of Campbellian hero and transforms throughout departure, initiation and return. Her departure begins as Bhishma abducts her from Kanshi royal palace. Bhishma's violent action is the call to adventure. The boon from Shiva is the supernatural aid for Amba. She crosses the first threshold as she enters into the pyre. Kubera extends Shikhandin's possession on manhood through the curse. Bhishma is the herald who announces the call to Amba. Because of this announcement, she finds herself in a new context. Entering into the pyre Amba steps into the unexplored. She finds darkness everywhere. She continues her journey even through the blazing fire. Amba jumps into the pyre because of the assurance of threshold guardian Lord Shiva. Home is the place where one shares his grief and happiness with the family members. Amba finds no one to do so. She only dreams a home where she could celebrate the pleasure of a family. As she gets rebirth in the form of Shikhandin, Sthunakarna helps her to find home. So she returns to the family of Draupada. Later on, she assists the Pandavas in their quest for home who have been made homeless.

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