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Designation

CHETHAN B MANJUNATH

Research Scholar

Department of English

Jnanabharathi, Bangalore University

Bangalore-560056

Ph: 9886705769

Email: chethanbmanjunath@gmail.com

Academic mail I.D: chethanbmanjunath@bub.ernet.in

Capitalization of Epic and Epic Capitalization: An Analysis of Chhota Bheem.

CHETHAN B MANJUNATH

Research Scholar

Bangalore University

Abstract

Epic is an absolute genre out of which the other genres have been emerging even at present. Each of the characteristics of epic has provided a great space for opportunity to create the elements of any genre. By the utilization of such among the characteristics, the cartoon shows on Indian television have emerged in establishing a strong capitalistic arena. In this context, the present paper attempts to analyze the cartoon show ‘Chhota Bheem’ to understand how the show has utilized epic characteristics and consequentially how it is capitalizing the epic out of its ‘pseudo-epic’ status. Further, the paper attempts to examine the social, psychological and cultural issues the show has been creating on the contemporary Indian society

Key Words: *Epic, Capitalism, Genre, Cartoon, Contemporary Indian Television.*

Epic according to *Handbook to Literature* “a long narrative poem in elevated style presenting characters of high position in adventures forming an organic whole through their relation to a central heroic figure and their development of episodes important to the history of a nation or race.” [4] (p, 192) The epic itself is the product of single genius. Epics without certain authorship are called folk epic. Contrary to that capitalism works, capitalism works on the basis of investment made by a person or organization in trade and industry for profit in accordance. If you want to understand Indian Literature one has to start with the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. That is why in the preface of the *Mahabharata* C. Rajagopalachari written like this “one may tour all over India and see all things, but one cannot understand India’s way of life unless one has read the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, at least in a good translation.” [1] Myth and epic both are important to any nation Plato strongly wanted the future citizen of his ideal republic to begin their literary education with the telling of myths rather than with mere facts or rational things. The *Mahabharata* belongs to the world and not only to India. The *Mahabharata* was composed many thousand years ago, but generations of gifted reciters have added to Vyasa’s original a great mass of material. According to C. Rajagopalachari “All the floating literature that was thought to be worth preserving of nearly thirty centuries, found a place in it.” [1] (p, xi) The *Mahabharata* discloses rich civilization of that time.

Chhota Bheem is a cartoon character it’s been arriving from 2008 in Pogo channel. Chhota Bheem character immensely popular, produced by Secunderabad-based Green Gold Animation and co-produced by Turner International. This animation show created by Rajiv Chilaka and character Chhota Bheem inspired by the epic character Bhima of the *Mahabharata*. The *Mahabharata* considers being one of the primary texts in Indian tradition. According to A.K Ramanujan, the *Mahabharata* text is “eight times the size of *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* put together.” [2] (p, 162) Even the *Mahabharata* provides materials to a different artistic genre like cartoon shows, movies, and T.V serials even Shashi Tharoor present M.P retold the *Mahabharata* story through his fictional work *The Great Indian Novel* (1989). Chhota Bheem character is a spin-off on the adult version of Bhima from epic the *Mahabharata*. Chhota Bheem is a nine-year-old boy with extraordinary intelligence and muscular power, but the story doesn’t end with this Bheem has become an icon for six to twelve years old children.

The success of the cartoon character Chhota Bheem has become a capital for many products like fans, notebooks, games, towels, and even shoes. According to Business today “Green Gold Animation’s revenues were around rs20 crores in 2012.”[5] After the success of the character Chhota Bheem, Green Gold Animation (G.G.A) has released feature films such as Chhota Bheem and the *Throne of Bali* (2013), *Chhota Bheem Aur Krishna* (2009) and *Chhota Bheem and Krishna in the Rise of Kirmada* (2012). In all these movies G.G.A has used epic characters. Television is the powerful way to reaching a large number of people. The present Indian television cartoon shows like Chhota Bheem by demonstrating a pseudo-epic to children, children have started believing that, this is the real epic written long back ago by Vyasa. But, in real television is misleading the children and people by his technical advancement.

We all know that there is no one *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in India. The oral tradition of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* retold from the different perspective. Even writers like K.V Puttapa, V.S Khandekar, Bhairappa and Girish Karnard retold the story with different perspectives. I took Chhota Bheem as an example to analyze the Indian television strategies of making profits out of epic. Indian television and producers know that epic sell in the market. The real purpose of reading epic is to understand the richness of Cultured life present in that time, spiritual thought, art of war... according to C. Rajagopalachari;

“There was an accepted code of honorable warfare, deviations from which met with reproof among kshatriyas... Kurukshetra battle, on account of the bitterness of conflict, frustration, and bereavements. Some of the most impressive passages in the epic centre round these breaches of dharma” [1] (p, xiii)

Chhota Bheem lives in a mythical city called Dholakpur whenever village people fall in trouble Bheem protects them “his strength to help those who are wronged or needy and nabs culprits, robbers and is seen as a guardian of innocent and poor people and also the animal.”[5] Bheem is the demigod in the city of Dholakpur. Chhota Bheem is in a way a popular show and children are the targeted audience. The Director of Chhota Bheem has created a pseudo-identity of Bheem that nine-year boy can do miracles. Children by watching this kind of cartoon show, they create a pseudo-icon in them. Sometimes it’s conscious, and in the majority it’s unconscious. Watching

Chhota Bheem like the cartoon show, a child leaves in a fantasy world that Bheem is there to protect us in the time of troubles.

Chhota Bheem craving for laddoos, in fact, it makes him stronger than he normally is. The question arises the laddoo nutrition rich. According to the nutrition experts, one Indian Boondi laddoo contains 185 calories, 135mg of sugar and 5mg of cholesterol and finally, it contains only the 4gm of protein. With this same kind of situation can be found in the cartoon namely *Popeye: the Sailor Man* created by Elzie Crisler Segar in this cartoon show Popeye eats 'spinach' like Chhota Bheem eating laddoo. But 100 grams of spinach contains only 23 calories, 15% of potassium and protein 5% spinach also contain vitamin A-187%, Vitamin C 46%, Calcium 9% and Iron 15%. 100gm of spinach contain the nutrition values that are in need for the child's growth. [6]

Is Indian epic and myths sell in the market the Gita Mehata revealed this question in her Docu-fiction *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East*.(1979) The book is about the traditions of an ancient, and long-lived societies turned into commodities. In a way west come to India in the name of 'spiritual tourism' they bring drugs to the Indian villages and hear Indian spiritual guru's make the profit out of it by saying that India is a 'Rishi Bhoomi' or the land of sages. Even the same type of situation can be seen in the Marathi film directed by Umesh Vinayak Kulakarni namely *Deool* (2011) acted by Nana Patekar and Sonali Kulakarni. The film is about commodifying the god 'Datta.' Even we can see the same situation in Chhota Bheem. Bheem became a capital for many items. With this, we can come to the conclusion that Chhota Bheem is the capital for the producer and director.

Conclusion

The *Mahabharata* has molded the character and civilization of one of the most numerous of the world's people. The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic, it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a philosophy of social and ethical relations. But present television industry for the purpose of making the profit creating a pseudo-epic by, using technical advancements. If television industries' real purpose is to introduce Indian culture to children introduce them Harikatha, Baratanaty, Yakshagana and Folk literature.

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