MYTH REPRESENTED IN DHRUV BHATT'S *AKOOPAR*

Dr. Mori Brijeshkumar Bhimsinhbhai

M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D.

Email: brijeshkumarbmori@gmail.com

Abstract

Dhruv Bhatt is a well-known author who contributes to the canon of Gujarati literature. He has a really distinctive approach to writing, which has made him famous. He has provided magnificent pieces of work that transport the reader to a certain fictitious realm. He is a modern Gujarati writer who has published novels as well as travelogues. Samudrantike, Tattvamasi, and Akoopar are three of his most well-known works. The numerous legends are skillfully woven into the fabric of the characters in the novels. The depiction of these individuals is so convincing that it gives the impression that they are genuine. A myth is a narrative that has been passed down through generations and is associated with historical or ancient individuals and events. In point of fact, a myth is a fabrication or a folktale that has gained widespread circulation. There are some people who hold the belief that they are real.

In the novel Akoopar, Dhruv Bhatt has written about myth. A contract has been signed by a painter to create fifty paintings of the planet. He is able to experience, appreciate, and investigate Garavi Gir (Gir Forest) as a result of his unwavering faith in the element of earth. The most intriguing aspect of the novel is its title, Akoopar. It is based on the Mahabharat fable. The Sanskrit term 'Akoopar' refers to a deity tortoise that is sustaining Sheshnag. During his travels through the Gir forest, Dhruv Bhatt encountered numerous individuals and the 'Bhutiyo Vad' (haunted Bunyan tree). When the wind travels through the foliage of a Bunyan tree, they emit a sound. People believed that the sound was produced by a spirit. The other interesting myths are the marriage of the hills with another hillock and the history of 'Ghantalo and Ghantali'. There is a number of myths such as 'Lakshman-Rekha', 'Lord Narasimha', 'Goddess Khodiyar','Goddess Avad', 'Thanak', 'Hidimba' (beautiful female demon who marriedBhim in *Mahabharat*)and many more they attract the readers.

(**Key words:** Myth, Gir-forest, Nature, Tradition, Folk-tale)

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Dhruv Bhatt is a prominent contemporary Gujarati author who has authored numerous novels in Gujarati, some of which have been translated into English, Hindi, and Marathi. In 2011, his famous novel Akoopar was originally published in Gujarati. Piyush Joshi and Suresh Gadhvi translated the novel Akoopar into English as 'Akoopar-The Infinite' in 2014. The novel's focus is not on a specific character or theme, but on 'Gir' or 'Ghed', as indicated by its title. The novel's narrator is a painter who agreed to make painting

dependent on the element of the earth in order to assist an interior designer. There is an intriguing history behind the proper noun naming of rivers, hills, locations, and even animals in this novel-come-travelogue. Sansai, the novel's protagonist and most outspoken female character, captivates the audience until its conclusion. As in his previous novel, 'That Thou Art,' Dhruv Bhatt has included some well-known historical bifurcation incidents in this book. Myth is a prevalent story that was created in the past to explain natural events or facts to a small or large group of people. Merriam Webster defines myth as: "A usually traditional story of presumably historical events that serves to unfold part of the worldview of a people or explain a belief, a practice, or a natural phenomenon."(Webster)

The title was suggested by a friend to the author. Akoopar translates to tortoise. The title, which is disclosed at the conclusion of the novel, also contains the myth. This novel contains a narrative from Dhruv Bhatt's beloved epic, the Mahabharata. The protagonist of the novel, Aima, creates paintings inspired by the Mahabharata. The name Akoopar is also derived from a folktale that makes reference to the Mahabharata. Akoopar is primarily a Sanskrit word that refers to a divinity tortoise sustaining Sheshnag (the earth-supporting serpent). According to the Mahabharata myth, one of Lord Vishnu's incarnations is described in the Akoopar,

> Our forefathers used to say that the earth rests on the hood of the Sheshnag (the great serpent) and the Sheshnag is supported by a tortoise. Whether human beings or demons, if they indulge in persecution, the burden falls on both of them. Then the earth would approach the lord in the form of a cow and appeal for help and in some form, the lord will incarnate. He may come in the form of the fish, the boar or the Narsinh. Basically, the objective is to lessen the earth's sorrow. (Akoopar p 291)

Here is the legend of Lord Narsinh. He was one of Lord Vishnu's incarnations with a human body and lion's head. Lord Narsinh arrived to save Prahalad's life and smite the demon Hiranyakashyap. Narsinh is the fourth incarnation of Lord Vishnu among all these incarnations. It is obvious from the name that Narsinh is a combination of a human and a lion. His entire body is human, but his muzzle is that of a lion. Humans are the most intelligent species, while the lion is the most powerful. Therefore, Lord Shri Vishnu assumed the ideal male and lion form. In reality, Hiranyakashyap assumed this form as a result of Brahma's benediction. Do not die on that day, at night, if you are a deity, a demon, a human, a beast, or a bird; do not die with a weapon; and do not die in the air, the water, or the ground. Therefore, it was impossible to kill.

Therefore, it was necessary for the Lord to assume the guise of Narsinh in order to slay Hiranyakashyap within the boundaries of this blessing.

In the novel Akoopar, the Lakshman-Rekha legend from the Indian epic Ramayana appears twice.In contemporary Indian society, Lakshman-Rekha refers to a rule or restriction that can never be violated. Frequently, it also refers to the moral limit that can prevent undesirable outcomes. The myth regarding Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Ram. According to legend, Sita requested that Ram deliver the golden antelope. Ram went behind the golden deer (which is actually a vicious demon) and did not return for a considerable amount of time. The demon cried for assistance in Ram's voice. Sita was concerned and asked Lakshman, Ram's junior sibling, to go after him. Lakshman could not hear Sita sobbing, but he could not leave his Bhabhi alone, so he drew a defensive line outside the cottage. Lakshman has prohibited Sita from crossing the defensive line that has been drawn around the cottage. As soon as Lakshman left to find Ram, Ravan assumed the guise of a vagrant and demanded alms. Ravan told Sita to leave Lakshman-Rekha for Bhiksha, and when she did, he abducted her and took her to Pushpak Air.

In Akoopar Ramjana-the lioness was resting under the shade of a large tree. To find a lioness asleep alone in the hot afternoon under the shades of a large tree, leaving aside the natural habits of lions to pass their day in the loneliness. Hidden behind the bushes of berries or karamda Shrub Ramjana would thus manifest herself was something which no one hadexpected. Mustapha also said, "You are lucky. It is normally never so." And walked about twenty-five steps and sat on a pushed out root of a tree and said, "This is your *Lakshman Rekha*- a line of control. Don't go beyond it." (Akoopar p 116)

In this incident, Mustapha is using Lakshman-Rekha as a line of control for being away from the lion. He took only twenty-five steps, drew a line to stay away from the lioness,and told others that this is the line of control, whichthey should not cross. In the Gir, people respect Saavaj (the lion) Mustapha shows a Lakshman-Rekha in the owner of the lion and also to save the people and informally show them their limits.In Akoopar Mustapha is using the word Lakshman Rekha when he described the incident when Dorothy ask to Dhanu for bringing another pant for her.

Dhanu was puzzled for the boss had strictly instructed him not to go anywhere living Dorothy all alone in the jungle or he would lose his job. It was the *Lakshman-Rekha* the line of control or limit, which even Goddess Sita was not supposed to cross.How couldDhanu go beyond it? (Akoopar p 116)

Dhanu was likewise bound in duty and having confusion about leaving his responsibility Dorothy all alone in the exile. The author brings up the occasion when Laxman was in total uncertainty about leaving his Bhabhi Sita all alone in the exile. In the same manner, here Dhanu was also confused about abandoning his responsibility Dorothy all alone in the exile. The narrator mixes both the story and the question by pointing out that even Goddess Sita was not meant to exceed this line of control limit; thus, an ordinary lad like Dhanu could not cross it!

There is another tale that centers on the main character Sansai, who is a woman.Sansai was the name of one of Goddess Khodiyar's sisters. She was the daughter of the maldhari Charan Mamdiya and his wife Devalba. It was also possible to refer to her as Minbai. They were blessed with seven daughters. Avad was the eldest of them all, followed by Jogad, Togad, Bij, Hol, Sansai, and finally Khodi herself, who was the seventh oldest of them all. Janbai was Khodi's true name before he adopted that moniker. Janbai had to travel to the underworld to retrieve the urn containing the nectar, and when she returned, she was unable to walk. As a result of this, people began to refer to her as the Khodi lame one. Because of this, people started referring to her as Khodal or Khodiyar. According to Aima, at the beginning there was nothing; neither this planet nor the Sun God existed at that time. It was at that time that one 'Avad – the original one – came into being; as she stated, "Avad the originator, created the world. She created everything. At that time, she also created Gayr.She also created Maldhari, the buffaloes and the cows." (Akoopar p 99)

Mother Khodal created everything then she handed over the cattle to Maldharies and commanded them, "Never graze your cattle on the slopes. There will be ample of grass in the Gayr. More than anywhere else. But see to it that reverence for the hey is maintained and your cattle do not graze on hills. You can graze them on plains and also in the valley." (Akoopar 99)

The maldhari posed the question, "If they graze their cattle at the foot of the hill, how will they protect their cattle from the lion?" (If they pasture their cattle at the foot of the hill). Ai bestowed upon the lions the strength of twelve oxen and commanded them not to destroy the cows that belonged to Maldhari as

well as to show regard for them. There is a story that Ai Avad commands the lions, which may be another reason why the inhabitants of Gayr do not fear them. Goddess Avad said, "You are human beings. You cannot be granted a strength. But you are granted a promise that if you don't harass lions, they would not attack you. Even now, you are scared. You are promised that your buffaloes would protect you." (Akooparp 99)

Many different myths are told during the course of the tale that is told in the novel/travelogue called Akoopar. The author contrasts and places Dorothy, a woman of African descent, in the same category as Hidimba, a female demon to whom one of the Pandavas, Bhim, was wedded. Lakshman-Rekha is the one who expresses Dhanu's hesitation over the decision of whether or not to leave Dorothy all by herself in the bush and whether or not to depart. The goddess Avad, her blessings, and the orders she gave to the lions. The reader is transported into the fantastical world of myth by the promise that was made to both humans and cattle.

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