



**“The Concept of Honor and Glory in Homer’s Iliad: A study on the
Hero’s Perspective”**

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Letter of Approval

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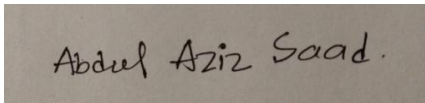
Dear Sir,

I have conducted the thesis entitled “The Concept of Honor and Glory in Homer’s Iliad: A study on the Hero’s Perspective” as a course requirement in my undergraduate degree.

I have done my level best to work sincerely to cover all the aspects regarding the matter which I have been assigned.

I believe that this thesis has enriched both my knowledge and experience. I hope you will assess my report considering the limitations of the study. I will be highly grateful if you kindly accept my thesis. Your kind approval is solicited.

Sincerely yours,



Abdul Aziz Saad.

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Certificate of Approval



This is to certify that Abdul Aziz Saad [ID: 193-10-2121] has done his Bachelor’s thesis entitled “The Concept of Honor and Glory in Homer’s Iliad: A study on the Hero’s Perspective” under my supervision and guidance.

This study has been undertaken as a part of the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts [B.A.] Degree in the Department of English.

The thesis is expected to contribute in the field of literature and literary works.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature consists of a stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line and the date '29.05.23' written below it.

.....

Supervisor

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Acknowledgement

The academic procedure known as "Thesis" allows students to connect their theoretical knowledge to research fields. As a student of Bachelor of Arts in English at Daffodil International University, I consider myself fortunate that I get to go through the process of finishing my course curriculum.

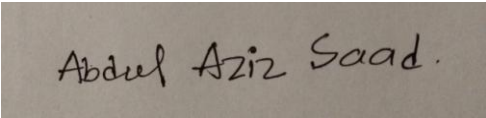
I would like to thank Mr. Md. Ariful Islam Laskar, Assistant Professor, Department of English for his guidance as a supervisor of my thesis paper. Without his help, I would not have been able to finish the thesis report.

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I’m very much thankful towards my family member’s who always keep their belief in me. I consider myself as a lucky person for everyone who helped me through all the steps by sharing their ideas and knowledge.

Declaration of Authorship

I certify that the work presented here is to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and the result of my own investigation, except as acknowledged, and has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for a degree at this or any other university.



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Sincerely,

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Dedication

In the realm of academia, where knowledge intertwines with guidance, I am honored to dedicate this thesis to the exceptional mentor, Md Ariful Islam Laskar. With immense gratitude and profound respect, I acknowledge his invaluable contributions as both my teacher and thesis supervisor.

Abstract

The Iliad is an ancient Greek epic; this poem shows us the Troy vs. Greece war and many more scenes in between Hector [The Hero of Troy] and Achilles [The Hero of Greece], and King Agamemnon King of Greece]. In this research paper, the Honor and the Glory of Greek society will be discussed based on the Iliad by Homer. In ancient times, Honor and Glory were the most important for the Greek king and the warriors. This research paper will try to find out the fact and myth of Glory and Honor prevalent in that ancient time of Greece. There are many ideas in Iliad but one of the major ideas of Iliad is the Glory of the king and the Honor of the warriors in the war. To be a wealthy person, the ancient Greek men try to show their ability on the battlefields. Those warriors who are glorified in the war performance become hearsay and those people stay in the future tales after their death. So, Honor and Glory are more important in their part of life, and the importance of Glory and Honor are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Worth of Honor, battlefield, importance of Glory, Hero and their heroism, Ancient Greek power.

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1. Introduction

“Mother!

You gave me life, short as that life will be.” [Homer, Iliad, 1.416-417.]

The Iliad is an epic poem which is about the Trojan War. This poem is the first epic poem which is written in the European tradition. Surprisingly, its excellence and attractiveness have not yet been matched. This is due to Homer's employment of idealistic themes, many of which are prevalent in contemporary literature. One of the important themes of Iliad is Honor and Glory. In the Trojan War, if we look at the battlefield both Greek and Trojan soldiers and heroes showed similar behaviour but for them, Glory is the most important thing for them than their life. Iliad is a poem that shows the heroic values of that ancient Greek tradition. Homer said about war “bringing Glory to man.” Though war was the biggest part of the Greeks and Trojans life. People of that time gained Glory by their courage and ability. Homer also convinces the readers of Iliad that war is the one and only noble solution to solve a conflict. As an example, the Trojans and the Trojan hero Hector neglected Paris [Prince of Troy] for Helen [wife of Menelaus]. Besides, the Greek hero Achilles earned Glory by becoming a great fighter and that makes him an epic hero. The people in The Iliad hold such a strong value on prestige and Honor that they're prepared to put their lives at risk to achieve it.

The Iliad by Homer shows a different tradition than the western culture and tradition. Iliad is an epic poem which is based on the “Trojan War.” There are many papers on the Iliad but in this paper, I’ll discuss the Honor and the Glory of the soldiers of the Trojan War.

2. Literature Review

Greek society placed a high importance on honor because it was considered more precious than life. The greatest human tragedy, in their eyes, was a lack of honor. It was frequently said as a "shame culture," where a warrior's value was based on their ability to establish a reputation for heroic acts or activities. Your identity and worth were largely created by how others regarded you- this is where the Iliad enters the picture, since the poem's central theme was the rejection of honor. We can find that, in Homer's Iliad, denial of honor is crucial. When it comes to dishonor, we witness examples of excess and extremes, as well as the punishment that follows. The poem's foundation is based on the greatest human tragedy in Greek civilization, the loss of honor, as was already established. The play's foundation and actions show the lengths to which both people and gods will go in order to gain the desired immortal reputation of honor.

In William James' "Representative Essays in Modern Thought," the battles of Greece were solely piratical (James 02). He further claims, their only motivations are pride, wealth, women, and the excitement of the slaves. Although I agree with this statement, it mentions some other elements, such as the honor and Glory of war and racial harmony. Menelaus turns to his brother Agamemnon after Paris abducts Helen from Sparta and brings her to Troy and the two of them prepare an expedition to fetch her back. The essay "The Iliad or the Poem of Force" by Simone Weil was written in 1939, just as World War II was beginning. The essay explains how the Iliad illustrates how using excessive force during a war degrades both the victim and the aggressor to the status of a slave and an unfeeling automaton. This essay, however, focuses solely on the Honor and Glory of Greek warriors.

Many more researchers write about Honor and Glory. There is a little bit of scope to talk about this topic and in this research paper I’ll focus on the Honor and Glory between Achilles and Hector during the Trojan War. Besides I’ll focus on the behaviour of the soldiers in the battlefield for achieving Honor and Glory.

3. Methodology

The Iliad contains Homer's vision of Honor and Glory, which is the focus of this research. This research is mostly performed using secondary sources using a "descriptive" and "analytical" approach to nature. To make them effective and authentic, this paper's analogies from the majority of authors, learners, and researchers have been rigorously assessed and studied. Some information or resources linked to this paper were also gathered from a variety of journals, websites, articles, and texts.

Discussion

Theme of Honor and Glory in Ancient Greek Society

In ancient Greek society, people used to tell stories orally and it was their part of tradition. Basically after making these oral stories they used to convert it into drama and they perform this drama on the stages. After that, when they find out how to write, they quickly write down all of the stories. The researchers think that may be lyrical poetry first invented by the ancient Greek people. These poems are influenced by the ancient beliefs and socio-cultural activities of the ancient Greek society. Iliad by Homer is one of those epic lyrical poems. To understand ancient Greek civilization Iliad plays an important role.

Ancient lyrical poems describe the idea of Honor and Glory and are always centred in their conventional beliefs and morals. There is no doubt that, in the time of Homer, he was the best poet ever. He is considered as the best poet in this modern era. The great philosopher Plato once said about Homer that he is the trainer of all Greece. Plato’s thinking proves that Homer is not only influential to ancient Greek society; he is also influential to the future generation of Greece. It also proves that if anyone wants to know about the socio-cultural activities of the ancient Greek society, they should understand Homer’s works first.

There are a lot of themes in the Iliad but memory is one of the important themes in Iliad. In this epic poem, Homer shows how people will remember the culture of ancient time, even the memories of that time are stored by Homer in his poem. As a trainer, Homer also taught the playwrights how to write plays in that time. Homer believes that poetry is an element that protects the memories, poetry can save the memories for future generations. We know that Homer’s Iliad is written down after the death of Homer. In this way Homer’s belief comes true that one day people will think about Homer and the Trojan War.

One of the best ways to see ancient Greek society from the modern perspective is Iliad, because the Trojan war was the biggest element of Greek society and Iliad describes the Trojan war. By this poem readers get introduced with the great hero of all time [Achilles]. By this character, Homer portrays the ancient Greeks' socio-cultural and political attitude. Readers can't fix what Achilles should do - whether he has to be brave and get a heroic death in the battlefield or he has to live long by avoiding death. By this poem readers get an idea that the people of ancient Greek society put importance on death and the afterlife. Even readers get an idea of how Greek people want to overcome their death by being memorised.

The Trojan War is the biggest historical event of ancient Greece and it was portrayed in different cultures in different ways. Homer’s epic shows why the war happened or what is the background history of this war. Iliad shows us that by the spirit of Achilles, Greek people can overcome the battle, their pain and their destiny. Though it is a poem of war, this poem also invokes people towards patriotism. In this poem, Homer uses Hector's death as an example, “a thing ... whose Glory shall perish never [Homer, Iliad 2.324].”The idea of Glory and Honor is established by the death of a young warrior who knows that he can't fight longer against death but because of gaining Honor and Glory for his king he fights like a brave and gets death. Homer comes with odysseys to prove that some wrong actions was taken in that battle “disgraceful to wait long and at the end go home empty-handed [Homer, Iliad 2.297].”

The idea of death and the afterlife, as well as how Homer addresses the ideas of demoralisation and remembering of the heroic archetype, are final draws for viewers. Most significantly, viewers gain knowledge through Plato's concepts regarding Homer as "an educator" of Greece. The claim that Virgil plagiarised the Iliad to create Adenoid, a poem about Roman history, demonstrates how crucial the text is as a means of imparting important social norms and ideas to common people.

The concept of Honor and Glory in the Iliad

Iliad, an epic poem by Homer, in this epic poem Honor referred to the value of a character. The Iliad tries to reflect the ancient Greek civilization, but Honor and Glory are on the top of the poem’ theme. Main characters of this poem drive us to focus on Glory and Honor. Though ancient Greeks are the most war-based society, Honor and Glory are the most important element for all of the Greek people to gain some place in the country or society. People believe that if they can show their own bravery on the battlefield, they can ensure their remembrance in society as a hero. Crain and temples are built for the heroes for their Honor for the man of Greek civilization and birds' sings the song of their heroic works. These men's tries to leave their works as a part of encouragement for the next descendant even sometimes they perform as the messenger of the God or even they are praised as God. Homer describes, “The god of war is impartial: he hands out death to the man who hands out death.”[Homer, Iliad, 18, 359-360]. In the epic poem Iliad, we can find out a lot of instances of heroic achievements told by both commanders in the war between Troy and Greek soldiers. They talk about the heroism and the Glory and Honor earned by their previous soldiers. This notion is established to confirm that if anyone attacks their generation or country or society with any kind of enemy, they can protect themselves and if it comes to their Honor or Glory then they can protest that. After listening about the Glory and the Honor, the soldiers give their all bravery in the battlefield and if they died in the battlefield, they never think about that, but they try to ensure that they died with the Honor and the Glory. Without Honor and Glory, they never want to live because they try to go to the battlefield and want to die with Honor and Glory. For the Greek society, Honor and Glory are the everything for the people as an example we can give see in the behaviour of Achilles the great Greek warrior, when his slave girl is taken by the Greek king Agamemnon, “Imagine – I and Achilles, wrangling over a girl, battling man-to-man. And I, I was the first, to let my anger flare. Ah if the two of us could ever think as one, Troy could delay her day of death no longer, not one

moment.” [Iliad, 2.448-452] . Achilles feels insulted. Because he considers that his earnings are his Glory, and his Honor is taken away.

Besides that, if anyone goes opposite of Honor or goes on the path of shame that is worse than death. After reading the text of the epic poem by Homer, why did Hector go for the war with Achilles though he knows that this can be his last battle on the battlefield? The answer is, “live or die – that is the lovely give-and-take of war.”[Homer, Iliad, 17. 262], this is a line of Hector when he is going to fight against Achilles. This line shows that for earning or protecting the Glory and Honor of himself or the Troy, though he knows that this will be his last battle, Hector continues his battle against Achilles.

Significance of Honor and Glory in Iliad

Homer's epic poem "The Iliad" tells the tale of the Trojan War and the characters who took part in it. Honor and Glory are one of the poem's main themes, and many of the characters' actions are influenced by this concept.

Glory and Honor were highly prized in classical Greek culture. Honor was regarded as an indicator of one's value and was strongly related to one's reputation. A person's reputation was based on their behaviour and how others saw them. On the other side, Glory was a means of immortality that could only be attained through heroic deeds.

For Honor and Glory, the Greeks in "The Iliad" are motivated. The greatest Greek warrior, Achilles, is particularly fixated on winning Glory. He thinks that the only way to become eternal is to perform acts of heroism that will live on long after he is gone. He is prepared to put his life in danger to accomplish this goal in war.

Achilles' sense of Honor is strongly related to his thirst for Glory. Achilles views Agamemnon taking Briseis, the Trojan girl who was his war prize, as a betrayal of his Honor. He leaves the fray and declines to fight until his Honor is restored. This choice has disastrous consequences for the Greeks because they can't overcome the Trojans without Achilles' leadership.

Honor and the concept of justice go hand in hand. Justice was regarded as a holy responsibility in ancient Greek society, and anyone who disregarded justice was thought to be dishonorable.

Achilles views Agamemnon taking Briseis as an injustice and an insult to his Honor.

While the Trojans also place a high value on Honor and Glory, they relate these concepts to their city and community more. The greatest Trojan warrior, Hector, struggles to protect his city and his people, even at the cost of his own life.

Hector's sense of Honor and responsibility are linked. Even if it means giving his own life, he feels that he has to protect Troy and its people. He cares about protecting his family's Honor, especially that of his father, Priam. This is clear by his choice to battle Achilles while knowing that he will probably lose. Hector believes that upholding the Honor of his family, hometown, and community is of utmost importance, even if it means giving his own life.

Characters frequently make choices in the poem that are motivated by their desire for Honor and Glory. Characters frequently make terrible judgments because they prioritise their own objectives over the welfare of society.

The fundamental themes of Homer's "The Iliad" are Honor and grandeur. Both the Greeks and the Trojans uphold these principles, and a significant portion of the tension in the narrative is caused by persons working toward them. Even though the quest for Honor and Glory frequently results in tragedy, it also serves as a reminder of how important reputation and status were in ancient Greek and Trojan society.

The concept of Hero in the Homeric Society

“Take thou thy arms and come with me.....

And we can combat even with the brave.”

- Homer [Collection of critical Essays, George Steiner, Robert Fables]

Iliad presents the concept of one's personal Honor in the society of Homeric society. In Homeric culture Honor is a very essential element but for the people who are hero, they try to protect their reputation as Honor. Those heroes never can accept their insult (orally or physically), they try to protect their reputation as Honor. From the Iliad, we can see that Hero's one and only job is to join the battle in the battlefield and give their best at the war. Though they fall into the life-death risk in the war, they have one and only goal to earn the Glory and immortality in the society by their action in the war. The hero's are ferocious in the battlefield but they believe that they should respect their opponent warrior too in the battlefield and for this they show their bravery but never try to show cruelty. They never disrespect another warrior. If the hero is going to kill any opponent warrior, they try to kill the opponent as early as possible by not giving any pain. But the so-called hero Achilles doesn't show any respect towards the Trojan hero Hector. To follow the ritual, the hero has a sense to ensure that they should keep the respect as he is given in the society.

Homeric Heroes use to lead their life by some precise social and cultural rules. And this norm helps them to find out the perfect way to lead their life in the war and in society. They accept the pain, sufferings and death for being a hero and also they believe that what they are performing that orders comes from the god and the superiors words.

For the Homeric heroes, religious Honor is very important and for their world they are surrounded by only their society and their families. If anyhow they lost their Honor and Glory in front of the society or in front of their family, they think that they have lost the meaning of their life. As an example, when Agamemnon takes Brises from him, he feels like he has lost his Honor. On that part Achilles says, “But Achilles wept, and slipping away from his companions, far apart, sat down on the beach of the heaving grey sea and scanned the endless ocean.” [Homer, Iliad, 1.413-415]

Even when Agamemnon sends a gift to Achilles to get him back, Achilles sent that back because he felt that he would lose his Honor if he accepted the gift. Homer portrayed this scene in his epic poem, “if our generous Arrives will give me a prize, a match for my desires, equal to what I’ve lost, well and good. But if they give me nothing, I will take a prize myself – your own, or Ajax’ or Odysseus’ prize – I’ll commandeer her myself and let that man I go to visit choke with rage!” [Homer, Iliad, 1.159-165]

Even, Achilles warns Agamemnon for insulting him, he says, “Someday, I swear, a yearning for Achilles will strike, Achaea’s sons and all your armies!” [Homer, Iliad, 1. 281-282]

Maintaining social status is the main responsibility of the Homeric hero by establishing their Honor by their performance in the battlefield. Besides that they are used to keeping respect for others and he has to obey the orders of their superiors and never disrespect themselves in front of society or friends. Even if they get into any kind of impossible situation, they try to show the full respect of the opponent because as a warrior they never can disrespect another warrior. Though Patroclus forgets about these principals. He disobeys the Achilles warning and irrationally he drives towards his false pride. Homer describes this scene in Iliad, “But one thing more. A last request – grant it, please. Never bury my bones apart from yours, Achilles, let them lie together... just as we grew up together in your house.” [Homer, Iliad, 23. 99-102.]

In Homeric society, heroes are remembered by the justification of their own religious beliefs. As an example, Agamemnon tries to place Achilles’ work on Zeus and his Destiny. It means Agamemnon tries to give all the credit to God over the Achilles’ bravery or heroic actions. Agamemnon says, "It is the god who accomplishes all things" [Homer, Iliad, 19. 85]. Even he calls it “Delusion” [Homer, Iliad, 19]. As like that when Achilles is going to fight against Agamemnon, Athena warns him for the sake of the god. She says, "Down from the skies I come to check your rage, if only you will yield. The white-armed goddess Hera sped me down: she loves you both; she cares for you both alike. Stop this fighting, now. Don’t lay hand to sword. Lash him with threats of the price that he will face." [Homer, Iliad, 1.241-246.]

It clearly portrays that Achilles is not guilty for his anger or for the desire to kill Agamemnon. Though Agamemnon or Achilles shows their cruelty, they never find themselves guilty because they think that only God and their destiny make their choice.

The Concept of Honorable Death in Iliad

The main idea of the epic poem Iliad is death which is coterminous near to Honor and Glory. The character of Iliad thinks that a death with Honor and Glory is more compatible death than an inedible death. It gives us the idea that Agamemnon and Achilles pick death rather than life. He express, “There is nothing alive more agonised than man of all that breathe and crawl across the earth.”[Homer, Iliad, 17.515-516]

Soldiers of each army think that one day they will have to die either at home or outside in the battlefield. So they want to give their best on the battlefield because they want to show them the best for the future generation. It is better for the warriors that a heroic death will be remembered by each and everyone. They will be praised in their society. So they want to die on the battlefield for a more comfortable and Honorable death than a death in their home.

Hector’s Honor

By fighting and sacrificing life, Hector wants to establish his Honor in the society and in front of the people of Troy. As a prince and a future King, if he never goes to the battlefield no one can blame him because his duty is to command the warriors because he is a commander. But Hector admires that death on the battlefield is better than life in this cruel world. He knows that he will be only remembered by his works, by his Honor in the battlefield. He loves his country and country people very much, so he wants to do something brave to show that Troy is not a weak country. Hector also wants to set an example for the soldiers and that’s why he goes on the battlefield.

Hector’s goal is to link his Honor and Glory with the history of Troy. He expresses his wish ,
‘Fight for your country – that is the best, the only omen!’ [Homer, Iliad, 12.281]

In this modern world, if we remember Troy, it is obvious to remember Hector for his heroic performance. But his brother Paris is always remembered for his cowardice. Hector warns him by saying, “Victory shifts, you know, now one man, now another.”– Homer [Homer, Iliad, 6. 402]

Though Hector knows that he will die if he faces the anger of Achilles but still he goes for the battle with Achilles and he dies on that battlefield with a happy ending of life. Homer portrays this, “Smile through his tears” [Homer, Iliad, 6.577]. Hector tries to save his city and welcome death Honorably.

Honor of Achilles

“No word or work of mine – nothing can be revoked, there is no treachery, nothing left unfinished ,once I bow my head to say it shall be done.”[Homer, Iliad, 1.629-631]

Iliad the epic poem of Homer, introducing us with the epic hero Achilles. In this poem Homer describes “Mother! You gave me life, short as that life will be.”[Homer ,Iliad, 1.416-417], this line express that her mother is worried about him for the war but Achilles choose the battlefield rather than going back to home ,when his mother Thetis gives him the choice of long life in tranquillity or a short life with Honor. Achilles chose the second choice because he wants a life with Honor and as like Hector, he also wants a life with Honor , he wants a life that will be remembered for forever and he did that well. When Achilles meets with Hector in the battlefield then Achilles says – “that lion heart who mauls battalions wholesale.”– [Homer, Iliad, 7.265.], it means Achilles considers himself as a lion heart warrior, this proves his Honor sense. And his attitude motivates the Greeks to continue the battle and finally they become victorious.

For the hero’s of Iliad, Honor comes first and Achilles is none above all the warrior's or the hero’s. He considers Honor first than any other element or things. For example, when Agamemnon takes Brises away from Achilles, Achilles cries out like he has lost something very important. He expressed, “ But Achilles wept, and slipping away from his companions, far apart, sat down on the beach of the heaving grey sea and scanned the endless ocean.”– [Homer, Iliad, 1. 413-415.] He promised himself that if Agamemnon doesn’t give his Brises back to him he will never go to the battlefield even if he wants to fight with Agamemnon. Homer describes this, “Anguish gripped Achilles. The heart in his rugged chest was pounding, torn... Should he draw the long sharp sword slung at his hip, thrust through the ranks and kill Agamemnon now? Or check his rage and beat his fury down?” [Homer, Iliad, 1.222-226]

Whatever, when Achilles heard about his friend's death he broke his promise and became ready for the war. Achilles again promises himself that he will take revenge for his friend’s death and it will be a dedicated Honor for his friend. Homer describes,

“So now I meet my doom. Well let me die – but not without struggle, not without Glory, no, in some great clash of arms that even men to come will hear of down the years!” [Homer, Iliad, 22. 359-362] After that at the end he drives towards his death and he willingly accepts that with Honor. This is how he gets his Honor after his death and his dream comes true.

Conclusion

Homer’s Iliad is a reflection of how much Ancient Greek people gave their importance to Glory and Honor in their own and social life. They believe that a short life or death with Honor is more important than getting old and getting death in the society because that will never help them to become remembered. As an example, we have talked about the two great warriors, Achilles and Hector, about their great wish of earning Honor and Glory. They both have the way to lead their life happily in their own society and with their own people but they prefer death over things. In this epic poem, Iliad, brings a great theme that Death is close to Honor because death will make the hero Honorable and glorious.

Even Hector’s presence is enough for the Trojan soldiers and gaining the victory but he chooses the battlefield and death for becoming more Honorable. Even when he comes in front of Achilles, he knows that he is going to die as soon as possible, but he wants that death because he is fighting against the great warrior among the Greek soldiers. It will make his death more and more Honorable.

So, the choices of the both heroes, Achilles and Hector shows that Honor and Glory are more valuable than having a long life. This paper has identified and discussed the differences in views of Honor and Glory in the epic poem, Iliad by Homer.

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