

From Troy to Today: A Comparative Study of the Iliad and Its Modern - Day Parallel

T. V. Varna Machamma

Assistant Professor, Department of English

St. Joseph's First Grade College, Jayalakshmiapuram, Mysuru.

Email - varnamachamma10@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper looks at the lasting significance of Homer's epic poem, The Iliad, by comparing the divine conflicts in ancient mythology with modern warfare. It argues that the egos of the gods, which triggered the Trojan War, reflect the ambitions and pride of today's political leaders. The study examines themes of divine intervention, changing alliances, and the timeless motivations that drive conflict. By contrasting the divine rivalries of Olympus with the geopolitical struggles of today, the paper shows how classical literature can help us understand and face the repeating cycles of war and ambition.

Keywords

Divine ego, modern warfare, political ambition, comparative literature, human conflict, classical literature, leadership.

Introduction

Homer's The Iliad and The Odyssey are essential works of Western literature that have resonated for centuries. The Iliad examines themes of war, glory, mortality, and the consequences of human passion, while The Odyssey delves into homecoming, loyalty, and perseverance. This study suggests that a key but often ignored aspect of The Iliad is the role of divine egos in starting the Trojan War. This theme provides a striking comparison to the reasons behind modern conflicts. The main idea is that the motivations for war—pride, ambition, and ego—have been consistent from the Trojan War to today, making classical texts valuable tools for self-reflection.

Literature Review

The central texts for this analysis are Homer's The Iliad and The Odyssey, which remain fundamental to Ancient Greek literature. The Iliad tells the story of the Trojan War, highlighting the heroism and moral complexity of its characters along with the gods' constant meddling, whose rivalries reflect human flaws. The war's origin, sparked by divine ego and discord among Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, sets a mythological precedent for human conflict. Similar themes can be seen in 20th- and 21st-century global conflicts, where shifting alliances and deepening rivalries stem from political pride and national ambition. The philosophical basis for this study draws on Socrates' thoughts about moral integrity versus political convenience, emphasizing the ethical challenges leaders face.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative analysis method. Through examining The Iliad, it identifies repeating themes such as ego, alliances, and divine intervention, and compares them with modern geopolitical conflicts. The approach is interpretive, viewing literature as a reflection of the enduring nature of human ambition and conflict. The study aims to reveal how mythological stories continue to shed light on leadership and the nature of warfare.

Results and Findings

The comparative analysis shows strong thematic similarities between The Iliad and modern warfare:

- Ego as a Primary Motivator: The divine ego is the main driver of the Trojan War, similar to how the pride and ambition of political leaders can spark global crises.
- Formation of Strategic Alliances: The divisions among the gods—Apollo, Artemis, Ares, and Aphrodite supporting Troy, while Hera, Athena, and Poseidon back Greece—mirror modern wartime coalitions like the Axis and Allied Powers. Unexpected alliances formed for convenience rather than shared values reflect the practical strategies of both periods.
- Enduring Relevance of Human Nature: Despite changes in society and technology, the basic causes of human conflict—pride, power, and ambition—have not changed. This shows the timeless insights of classical texts regarding human behavior.

Discussion

The findings confirm that classical literature offers more than just mythological tales; it provides a way to understand recurring human behaviors. The gods' petty arguments in The Iliad serve as metaphors for the power struggles among modern leaders, showing how decisions driven by ego lead to widespread suffering. By revisiting these stories, readers can engage critically with the moral aspects of power and conflict. While The Iliad does not offer solutions, it encourages humility and ethical leadership. The text's ongoing relevance lies in its ability to prompt reflections on the consequences of pride and the moral responsibilities linked to power.

Conclusion

The Iliad remains a timeless representation of modern geopolitical conflicts. The divine egos that ignited the Trojan War parallel the ambitions of today's leaders who wage wars from a distance. Classical literature continues to serve as a mirror for moral reflection, reminding us of the destructive cycles fueled by pride and power. As Socrates warned about the conflict between truth and political life, this study highlights the importance of moral clarity in leadership. By learning from the lessons of the ancient world, we may better avoid repeating history's worst patterns and work toward a more peaceful global order.

References

1. Homer. *The Iliad*. Translated by Robert Fagles, Penguin Classics, 1990. *Project Gutenberg*, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2199. Accessed 25 Nov. 2025. [Project Gutenberg](https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2199)
2. Plato. *Apology*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, 1892.
3. Knox, Bernard. *Introduction to The Iliad*. Penguin Classics, 1990.
4. Taplin, Oliver. *Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the Iliad*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
5. Bowra, C. M. *Tradition and Design in the Iliad*. Oxford University Press, 1930.
6. Nagy, Gregory. *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*. Harvard University Press, 2013.