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The Disowned Son: Ghatotkacha as the Pandava Shadow in Anand Neelakantan's Ajaya

Ms. Nanthini. S[1], Dr. N. Jhansi[2]

[1]Department of English, Vels Institute of Science anTechnology and Advanced Studies
[2]Department of English, Assistant Professor Vels Institute of Science and Technology and Advanced Studies

Abstract:
Ghatotkacha, son of Bhima and forest woman Hidimbi, saves Arjuna's life at Kurukshetra and gets little grief in exchange. This research investigates his representation in Anand Neelakantan's Ajaya: Roll of the Dice (2013) and Ajaya: Rise of Kali (2015) through Carl Gustav Jung's concept of shadow. The shadow is for Jung the traits a self refuses to acknowledge, and hence represses, and projects on others, and recalls when its energy is needed. The paper contends that Ghatotkacha is the shadow of the Pandava dynasty, and especially of Bhima. The study, based on an incident-based reading of six events, follows the Pandavas as they leave this shadow in the forest, name it Rakshasa, invoke its force in war and let it be sacrificed. The difference between the lamented Abhimanyu and the hardly lamented Ghatotkacha depicts a dynasty that mourns its persona and neglects its shadow. Ajaya, by challenging the winners' account and Krishna's stratagem, partially reveals the disowned son. Suyodhana remains at the center of the narrative, therefore the integration is still imperfect. The paper concludes by comparing this collective shadow to India's forest communities, whose contributions to the country have long gone unacknowledged.

Keywords: Ghatotkacha, Ajaya, Anand Neelakantan, Carl Jung, shadow archetype

Introduction:

Humans are gregarious animals, and every group of people are bound together by a common history. Every community has stories about its members. A family remembers some relatives with pride and mentions others just in passing. What a community chooses to forget says as much about its self-image as what it chooses to celebrate. Every community recounts stories about its members. A family remembers some relatives with pride and mentions others just in passing. What a community chooses to forget says as much about its self-image as what it chooses to celebrate. This pattern can be seen on a larger scale in epic traditions. The other characters are kept in the periphery of the story which allows the heroes to shine. Their deeds contribute to the victory, but their identities are lost to history when the victory is achieved. This pattern is visible in Ghatotkacha's story in the Mahabharata. In Javanese wayang theater, he is known as Gatotkaca, a brave knight of the sky (Anderson 65). In the Indian culture from which he comes, his place is much lesser. He is the son of Bhima and the Rakshasa woman Hidimbi. He grows up in the jungle after his father leaves to join his brothers. He returns to Kurukshetra only when the war is imminent. On the fourteenth night of Kurukshetra, his strength compels Karna to use the celestial weapon reserved for Arjuna. Abhimanyu, who was killed a day earlier, is mourned with protracted sorrow and even Arjuna promises revenge. Ghatotkacha's sacrifice is met with significantly less sorrow, and in the epic, Krishna

even rejoices (Mahabharata, Drona Parva, sec. 180). Two Pandava sons were killed on the same day, yet only one is mourned like a son.

Such overlooked characters have made a comeback in contemporary Indian English writing. The Mahabharata is retold against Jaya, the defeated's version, in Anand Neelakantan's two-volume Ajaya, which consists of Roll of the Dice (2013) and Rise of Kali (2015). "The tale of the Kauravas, who were decimated to the last man" is how Neelakantan describes his work (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali, back cover). Suyodhana wins loyalty and reason in these books, but Krishna's tactics raise questions. The epic denies interior life to forest characters like Ekalavya, Jara, and the Nagas. Ghatotkacha should be included in this group since he is also evaluated based on the narrative of the winners.

Carl Gustav Jung's concept of the shadow describes how a family might depend on a member it will not own. To meet the shadow, Jung says, is "a moral problem which challenges the whole ego-personality" (Jung, Aion, par. 14). The shadow contains features that a person refuses to accept as a part of themselves. Refused traits are repressed, projected onto others, and recalled when their vitality is needed. Jung also knew that groups project their shadow on outsiders, just as individuals do. The Pandava dynasty, as it is understood now, had a disowned gloom and a brilliant persona.

Ghatotkacha has received minimal attention, and criticism of Ajaya has mostly focused on Suyodhana, Karna, and the book's criticism of Krishna. According to the current view, Ghatotkacha in Ajaya represents the Pandava dynasty's shadow, particularly that of Bhima. The Pandavas abandon this shadow in the forest, give it the name Rakshasa, summon its military might, and let it perish. Ajaya partially illuminates the shadow, but the integration it provides is still lacking. In the sections that follow, six instances from Ghatotkacha's life are read, Jung's theory and methodology are explained, and the argument is applied to Indian forest cultures.

Theoretical Framework: Jung's Concept of the Shadow:

This element of the psyche, Carl Gustav Jung named the "shadow," because the aware self does not want to know it. It contains wants, impulses and attributes which do not fit with the image a person wishes to project. According to Jung, the shadow is universal: "Everyone carries a shadow" (Jung, Psychology and Religion, par. 131). The shadow gets denser and deeper the less it is recognized.Denial doesn't make it less. Deny it, you just conceal it.

"Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is." (Jung, Psychology and Religion, par. 131)

But the shadow isn't just the same as evil. It is "inferior, primitive, unadapted, and awkward; not wholly bad," according to Jung (Jung, Psychology and Religion, par. 134). It frequently possesses instinct, vigor, and unadulterated strength that the repressed civilized self has lost. The rejecting self may also covertly require a source of power from a rejected figure.

Jung combines the shadow with the persona – the face one presents to the world. He considers the persona "a compromise between the individual and the society" (Jung, Two Essays, 246). The persona caters to social demands of how one should look. The brighter and tougher this public image, the deeper the shadow it casts. A self that insists on its own purity must find its impurities somewhere else.

This combination is used to examine a royal dynasty. The Pandavas represent dharma, nobility and true kingship. Anything that cannot be contained in this image must be excluded from it.

A denied shadow remains active and manifests as a projection onto someone else. Such projections, according to Jung, make the universe "the replica of one's own unknown face" (Jung, Aion, par. 17).

Outsiders are frequently perceived as monstrous, which can be explained by projection. The monster turns into the rejected aspect of the self that can only be identified in the guise of another.
"our own faults appear in others, fantastically magnified" (Jung, "Role of the Unconscious," par. 45).
Jung expanded the shadow to include groups as well as individuals. He made the case in "The Role of the Unconscious" (1946) that entire groups can suppress their darker inclinations and project them onto others outside of their social circle (Jung, "Role of the Unconscious," par. 45). Similar to an individual, a group can construct its identity on the things it rejects.
Jung thought that psychological growth was based on the recognition of the shadow and its acceptance as part of the self. He refers to this ongoing process as individuation. Wholeness comes from addressing that which we have refused, not from rejecting it. According to him, enlightenment is achieved "by making the darkness conscious" (Jung, "Philosophical Tree," par. 335). When a self incorporates its shadow, it becomes complete. A self that continuously casts its shadow remains split and perpetuates its damage.
Jung's approach has been criticized for treating a European psychological theory as universal. The current analysis addresses this question in two ways. First of all, it doesn't look at the interior lives of certain characters. The Pandava family is interpreted as a group portrait with a shadow and a persona. Second, there are already some divided characters in the Mahabharata narrative, such fighting brothers, hidden sons, and double heroes. Jung's theory alludes to a recurring pattern in the epic itself.
Four Jungian concepts lead the analysis: shadow, persona, projection, and integration. Each event in Ghatotkacha's life is examined for the process it reveals.

Methodology:
The present analysis is qualitative and draws on attentive reading of the text. The main sources are Anand Neelakantan's Ajaya: Roll of the Dice (2013) and Ajaya: Rise of Kali (2015). The theoretical source is Carl Gustav Jung's writings on the shadow. The two volumes of Ajaya are read together, and the story of Ghatotkacha begins in the first and ends in the second.
The study is based on the incidents in Ghatotkacha's life in the epic. Six events from Ghatotkacha's life are selected and arranged chronologically. There are three levels in each episode. Ajaya begins by outlining the circumstances. Second, it is interpreted using one or more of the four Jungian terms: shadow, persona, projection, and integration. Third, the reading is assessed in light of the hypothesis and categorized as either unsupported, slightly supported, or supported.
Neelakantan: Ghatotkacha is not a shadow of any particular one. So the study does not claim to say anything about the author's purpose. The Mahabharata is recognized as a multiform tradition rather than a single, unchanging text. The epic is called upon only to explain how Ajaya adheres to or departs from popular versions of Ghatotkacha's story. The study does not compare Neelakantan to other retellers.

Analysis: Ghatotkacha as the Pandava Shadow:
Bhima's Forest Self: The Shadow Takes Form:
Ghatotkacha's shadow starts with his father. Bhima is the most physical of the five Pandava brothers. His appetite, his power and his fury distinguished him from Yudhishthira's restraint and Arjuna's delicacy. In Ajaya, Bhima's physical strength is often a threat to others, especially the Kaurava brothers in boyhood (Neelakantan, Roll of the Dice).
Bhima is perceived in this interpretation as the closest of the Pandavas to the instinctual aspect of the self. This side may only be accepted as a weapon of the royal persona of the family, not as an identity.

Following the house of lac, Bhima enters the forest and meets Hidimbi (Neelakantan, Roll of the Dice). In the forest, the instinctive self need not be concealed. Bhima still claims the forest family as his own: "Hidumbi is my wife and Khatotkacha is my son" (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali 121).

The son of this union inherits Bhima's strength but not his regal upbringing. Jung characterizes the shadow as basic and unadapted, but not completely terrible. Ghatotkacha nearly matches this description. In Jungian words, the shadow assumes a body. Ghatotkacha possesses everything in Bhima that Hastinapura would never attain. The hypothesis was tested and supported. The birth of the son marks the transition between the Pandava persona and its shadow.

Bhima's Departure: Repression:

The second occurrence involves leaving. Bhima remains with Hidimbi for a short while before rejoining his brothers. Bhima marries Hidimbi only at Kunti's insistence after he murders her brother and later leaves with his brothers (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali. 125-26). The march to Draupadi, Indraprastha and the throne continues. The voyage to Draupadi, Indraprastha, and the throne resumes. The forest wife and her son stay behind.

"due to my mother's misguided pity" (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali 125).

This is portrayed in the epic as the natural order. The forest is merely a stop in the Pandavas' journey to fulfill their destiny. According to this perspective, leaving was a repressive act. The royal ego vanishes from view and reverts to its character. According to Jung, the shadow is not destroyed by repression. The part that is denied endures outside of consciousness and becomes darker as a result of being disregarded.

The reading is confirmed by the ensuing silence. For many years, the Pandava tale revolves on the dice game, the exile, the construction of Indraprastha, and the svayamvara. At these events, Ghatotkacha is mainly absent. Every mention of him or Hidimbi in Ajaya during this time period is noteworthy because they all depict the shadow lurking at the edge of the narrative. Yudhishtra calls the marriage the family's burden:

"Today we are paying for the sin" (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali 126).

Tested hypothesis: validated. By leaving the shadow in the forest, the departure preserves the persona.

The "Rakshasa" Label: Projection:

The third event is about a term. Hidimbi is Rakshasa and her son. In the epic the word signifies a monster, another, a creature that is ravenous and violent. Ajaya questions such designations throughout. Neelakantan portrays forest peoples as communities with their own relatives, customs and allegiance (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali. 119, 124).

"He had given them no space in his city, yet they shared what they had with him" (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali. 119).

Although the Pandava narrative has its own brutality, the Pandava figure asserts dharma. The royal side is responsible for many of the war and sacrifices, including the burning of the Khandava forest and the humiliation in the dice hall. Hunger and bloodshed outside the palace are caused by Rakshasas, the name given to the forest inhabitants. According to Jung, projection causes the universe to resemble one's own unidentified face. The royal self uses the devil as a screen to view the qualities it has been denied.

Despite being Bhima's son, Ghatotkacha is a creature of a different type due to the designation. Tested hypothesis: validated. Ajaya's interrogation of the label starts to undo the projection it is performing.

The Summons to War: The Shadow's Energy Is Used:

The shadow is revealed in the fourth event. The Pandavas summon Ghatotkacha when war is certain, and he arrives. He has a strength the palace-born warriors lack. His strength is strongest at night, the time of darkness.

According to Jung, the shadow represents more than just a burden. The conscious ego has lost its instinct and vitality. During a crisis, the self frequently seeks this energy without understanding where it comes from. Ghatotkacha's position stays unchanged as the Pandavas welcome his forces. He fights as an ally, not as an heir.

"When you fight that evil man, call me, I will come to help you" (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali 126).

"He says only I can save my father from that Suta warrior" (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali. 403).

A father who abandoned him calls him. Ajaya's lines that convey his thoughts or ideas regarding this loyalty are especially significant.

The narrative starts to regard the shadow as a person when such a voice appears. The quiet of the epic is repeated in the novel when it is lacking. Tested hypothesis: validated. The summons depicts the shadow being denied its place and used for its strength.

The Fourteenth Night: The Shadow Sacrificed:

The fifth incident is the sacrifice of the life of Ghatotkacha in the war. On the fourteenth night, Ghatotkacha's attack sends the Kaurava army into disarray. Suyodhana urges Karna to utilize the weapon reserved for Arjuna. Some versions describe Ghatotkacha's massive body crushing Kaurava warriors as he falls.

In the epic, Krishna anticipated this result, and was relieved. Ajaya continued asking Krishna how he accomplished things. The sacrifice, read along with that criticism, looks to be a planned event and not a product of divine design.

"All Rakshasas have to be killed one day or the other, Bhima. It is good he is dying for dharma," Krishna said and Bhima blinked. (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali. 407).

The sacrifice, then, is the sacrifice of the shadow in an effort to defend the ego. The shadow takes the blow, and Arjuna, the ideal hero, lives. The dark son keeps up the outstanding repute of the dynasty. That is the opposite of Jungian integration. The self denies its own shadow. It will go through the dark for a little. The tested hypothesis is verified.

Two Sons, Two Deaths: Persona and Shadow Compared:

The sixth point is a comparison. Inside the chakravyuha, Abhimanyu is killed on the thirteenth day. His killing drives Arjuna to vow to slay Jayadratha before nightfall and to a long period of sadness.

"This is my oath before God." (Neelakantan, Rise of Kali. 382).

The next night Ghatotkacha is killed. The story soon returns to the combat and to its key characters, Karna and Suyodhana.

The two are interpreted as persona and shadow in this perspective. Abhimanyu is born in a palace close to the monarch. He represents the dynasty as it likes to see itself. Ghatotkacha was born in the wild and is not descended from anyone. He represents what the dynasty refuses to own. The family mourns its ideal image and scarcely acknowledges its disowned self.

A moment of mourning for Bhima in Ajaya would create a tiny room for integration, as a father would recognize the shadow as his own. The novel is kept within the pattern of the epic by a brief or absent mo

ment.

The hypothesis was tested and found to be true, Ajaya's recognition is still lacking.

Ajaya as a Shadow Text and the Collective Shadow of the Forest:

Ajaya is a story about the disowned. The winners' Mahabharata, referred to as Jaya by Neelakantan, keeps the Pandavas in the light and the Kauravas in the darkness. Suyodhana gains reason and allegiance, but Krishna's methods raise questions.

"Ajaya is an attempt to view the Mahabharata from the side that lost the war.) (Neelakantan, Roll of Dice. 08).

The epic tradition put doubt and anger onto the Kauravas. Ajaya pulls such projections back and asks the reader to see them as shared. Jung's concept of making the darkness conscious is well suited to this approach. Ghatotkacha, although being a Pandava follower, gains publicity through the novel's denunciation of Krishna, as Krishna's tactics are now viewed as planned.

The integration is still only partially complete. The Kaurava prince and Karna are at the emotional core of Suyodhana's tale, Ajaya. Though they remain on its periphery, forest figures enter with greater depth than in the epic. The disowned son is named in the book. He is not entirely brought home by it.

Beyond the words, the same pattern is present. According to Jung, groups throw a shadow over people who are not part of their circle. While relying on forest land and forest labor, the settled center of Indian culture has long characterized forest populations as untamed. The Munda Ulgulan, led by Birsa Munda, and the Santhal Hul of 1855 are two examples of Adivasi resistance that only gradually and unevenly made their way into national memory.

It has taken time for recognition to dawn. "Though the Forest Rights Act, 2006 recognizes that a historical injustice has been done to forest dwellers, it has not been fully implemented. The current view is that Neelakantan did not write Ghatotkacha as a depiction of any tribe. The claim is more modest; his narrative, invoked in times of crisis and forgotten in times of peace, fits the framework of a collective shadow. The shadow has been recognized but not yet assimilated into the book and national life.

Conclusion:

Ghatotkacha is the son that the Pandava dynasty could not own. The life of Ajaya has a clear progression when seen through the lens of Jung's concept of the shadow. He is born of Bhima's self in the wilderness and abandoned when Bhima returns to the royal route. He is portrayed as a devil, remembered for his combat might and spent for protecting Arjuna. He is never taken to their bosom by the dynasty.

The pattern is evident when compared to Abhimanyu. While the boy born in the forest is not mourned at all, the son born in the palace is mourned as the family's ideal. Only the persona is grieved by the family; the shadow and persona pass away on different days.

There is one qualification that supports the idea. By challenging the designations and tactics that made Ghatotkacha a weapon, Ajaya accomplishes some of the integration that the Pandavas rejected. Because Suyodhana continues to be the focal point of the book, the integration remains unfinished. Despite being more visible in Ajaya than in the epic, Ghatotkacha remains in its periphery.

There is a parallel for this partial recovery outside of the text. India's forest communities have steadily acquired prominence and supplied labor and land to the larger country. The shadow story of Ghatotkacha's life illustrates how a community can depend on what it rejects. Both traditions and individuals must face their rejected selves in order to achieve completeness, according to Jung's theory.

This reading has significance that goes beyond the book. Although their recognition has only progressively increased, India's forest communities have long supplied labor and land to the country as a whole. When viewed through the shadow, Ghatotkacha's story illustrates this disparity between acknowledgment and contribution. Jung found wholeness in having the guts to confront rejection. Returning the woodland son to view is Ajaya's first step toward achieving such wholeness. Both in literature and in society, there is still work to be done before the disowned are fully accepted.

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