



Divine Yet Human Epics: Reflections of Poetic Rulers from Ancient Greece and India (Hellenic Studies Series)

Shubha Pathak

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The central character of *Divine Yet Human Epics* is the developing conception of epic itself. Its story unfolds as the ancient Greek idea of epic originates with Pindar and Herodotus on the basis of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. While this notion eventually leads their Sanskrit counterparts, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, to be understood selectively in modern times, medieval readers Anandavardhana and Rajasekhara reveal distinctive features of these ancient Indian poems earlier in this exegetical tale. Shubha Pathak's interpretative account concludes with a new way to connect these primary epics to their Greek analogues. Both epic pairs feature poetic kings who together affirm and interrogate their societies' central religious ideals: Greek *kléos* (or heroic glory, which assuages uncertainty about the afterlife) and Indian *dharma* (or righteousness, which counters encroaching immorality). The Greek and Sanskrit epics, by showing both the divine ease and the human difficulty with which *kléos* and *dharma* are achieved, employ similar teaching strategies to address the shared psychological needs of human beings learning to live within the disparate cultures of ancient Greece and India. This cross-cultural comparative study thus provides a more comprehensive perspective on the poems' religiosity than the vantage points of Hellenists or of Indologists alone.

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