

**P.G DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MAHARAJA COLLEGE, ARA
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Analysis of Book I of The Iliad:

Book-I opens with “Anger – sing, goddess...” where Homer invokes the muse to assist him while depicting the story of a Greek hero and his anger and this invocation to the muse is one of the most important features of epic poetry. At the same time, the word “anger” at the very beginning hints at the main theme of the epic that is the anger of Achilles and the results originated from that anger. Most minutely the poem depicts how those incidents started, the reason behind the wrath of Achilles, the problems the Achaeans face because of that anger and last but not the least the Trojan War itself. In Book I, the initial argument between the commander-in-chief Agamemnon and the proud Achilles, prevented by wise Nestor and Athene’s guidance, is paralleled at the end of the book by the quarrel between Zeus and Hera, mediated by her son Hephaistos. The dispute among the gods turns into an entertaining scene that ironically puts emphasis on the severe magnitude of the human quarrel. Homer’s practice of reiterating an earlier scene with a later one is applied throughout the Iliad. Actually, the entire epic poem is based on this structural technique. The very beginning significantly establishes the conflict for the rest of the epic as the rage of Achilles appears to be defensible from Book I to Book IX though his anger is opened for criticism from Book IX to Book XVIII. But in Books XVIII and XIX, a conciliation is done by the poet and this pattern continued till the end.

Though the epic poem is based on the Trojan War, it only depicts the story after nine years of the war, only a few weeks during the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles in the final year of the war.

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At the same time, it does not depict the end of the War, rather it ends with the death of Hector and with the prophecy of Achilles' imminent death and the destruction of Troy. The central theme is the rage of mortals, the wrath of Achilles. But the gods do always interfere in the activities of the mortals and they engage themselves in the activities of the mortals both internally and externally. Apollo brought plague to the Greek camps by his external involvement whereas Athene controls Achilles' rage internally. But quite interestingly, sometimes the tricky activities of the gods bring some relief to the ongoing events of the mortals who are fighting for almost ten years. It's a kind of comic relief also as there is only war and destruction. For some critics the intervention of the gods in the human activities may have resulted from the quarrel among themselves. Actually, Homer has tried to depict the fact that human world is determined by the emotions and passions of gods. The whole event starts with Paris' selection of Aphrodite as the winner of the golden apple (the three goddesses Hera, Athene and Aphrodite asked Paris to choose the most beautiful goddess among them and Paris chose Aphrodite and offended Hera and Athene. As a result, Hera and Athene started supporting the Greeks and Aphrodite was supporting the Trojans in the Trojan War). But Homer does not mention the golden apple in his narrative, he only mentions in the final book that Paris offended Hera and Athena. The emotions of the gods and goddesses are translated into the actions in the human world and that connection between emotion and action is presented with clarity throughout the Narrative.

An important aspect of the lives of the Greeks comes to the fore through the clash between the two Achaeans—Agamemnon and Achilles and

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that are some values of the Greeks— the sense of honour and pride. For Agamemnon, his individual glories proved to be more important than the well-being of the whole Achaean army through his act of taking away Briseis from Achilles. On the other hand, Achilles told his mother to punish the Achaeans because of Agamemnon's wrong behaviour. Both these great heroes engage themselves in a bitter quarrel with each other for the captive women. Both of them thought about their individual pride and honour: Agamemnon took Achilles' "prize" and Achilles withdrew himself from the battle to teach Agamemnon a lesson by bringing problem to the Greek army. That overweening pride is 'hubris' which enforced the hero to behave in thoughtless ways.