

## THROWNNES AND WITNESS:

### A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF WAR

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#### Abstract

*Human beings are at times thrown into wars that are not of their choice. In spite of the typical war experiences between nations and states, human beings experience wars between closed groups, communities, and even individuals. It could be due to their gender, class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity etc. The wars between individuals might be understood as more of emotions rather than of reason, ideologies, politics etc. It is quite possible that all these elements of mental states and social situations mix-up while we make an analysis of the experiences of war among human beings. Even a war between two nations could arise due to the emotional issues in the minds of rulers who hold the power to lead nation and its warriors to fight a war. The people and the army of the nation would face a kind of thrownness into the war situation, that got initiated intentionally by a ruler's emotion that might have even camouflaged as reason. Thrownness of being, as coined by Heidegger would explain extensively about the experiences of war. This article would critically analyze the explanation of Heidegger on how Dasein is thrown and attuned within the thrown world system, where it was 'falling prey'. Husserlian concept of Witness would also expound the situatedness of beings that are not directly being-in-the-battlefield. Witness and the Secondary Experience, as explicated by Husserl are analyzed in this paper along with Heideggerian treatise of thrownness. To understand these concepts and their role in a social situation of war, this article makes an analysis of the thrownness of the being, and witness in intersubjective secondary experience of characters in the epic of Mahabharata. A historical story of war that opens up the canvas of mixed elements of thrownness and witness, paves the path to understand the phenomenology of war.*

**Key Words:** War, Thrownness, Falling Prey, Witness, Secondary Experience, Heidegger, Husserl, Mahabharata

## **I Introduction**

Philosophy as a thinking enterprise started with an intention to address the issues faced in human life. We could well assume the obligation of metaphysical pursuit by initial philosophers were certainly for eliminating worldly problems, though it was more of relying upon abstract entities and thoughts. Or, it was in a way to find reasons for our existence and experience in an absolute abstract concept. The thought on the very existence of ourselves or other worldly things arise in common human mind, only while they face any crisis in life. Philosophers took up this nature of human life and human mind, to develop thoughts on it and to have some solutions for lifeworld issues. Though ancient philosophy in Europe and in India were mainly metaphysical by searching for the eternal and ultimate reality, there was also attempts for unraveling the nature of human mind to explain how do we make knowledge. Phenomenology as an approach, was later developed in twentieth century for discussing how the human experiences could be understood without the abstract metaphysical enterprise. This approach would study the consciousness with intentionally intertwined with experiences.

One could argue that the lived-world situations of human beings include various kinds of issues due to the lack of equanimity and related experiences. One such severe issue is that of war between people who foster enmity. The concept of war could also be connected with the concepts power and social hierarchy to understand it in-depth. Recently we have been in the middle of utterly hate mongering wars around some countries, and even between small communities or groups in various localities that manifested power and identity politics. The horror of the First World War and Second World War that happened in twentieth century, still haunts the elderly people in European countries. In spite of these typical war experiences, human beings also experience wars

between closed communities or groups. And due to their gender, class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity etc. humans are facing some sort of war like situations in their life-world due to the individuality and identity. The war between nations such as Russia and Ukraine, India and Pakistan, Israel and Palestine are being discussed as of political matters. The clash or fight between the caste groups or communities are sometimes referred to as political only. These wars could also be understood as caused by the mental states of individual leaders. Even the big nation-state wars are basically between ruling individuals' emotions rather than reason, ideology, politics etc. It is quite possible that all these elements mix-up while we make an analysis of the experiences of war among human beings. A war between two nations could arise due to the emotional issues in the minds of rulers who hold the power, to lead the nation and its warriors to fight a war. The people and the army of the nation would face a kind of thrownness into the war situation, that got initiated intentionally by a ruler's emotion that might have camouflaged as reason. The experiences of various human beings in the time of war, would be well elucidated by Heideggerian discussion of 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*) and Husserlian idea of 'witness' (*Zuege*).

Thrownness of the Being-there (*Dasein*), as coined by Heidegger would explain extensively about the experiences of war (Heidegger, 1927). War as a topic had been discussed mainly under the study of history generally, and also that was only to document and explain the events happened in a time period. The approach of phenomenology with reference to the discussion of thrownness would contribute immensely to understand the concept of war philosophically. The famous story of war in the Indian epic Mahabharata would facilitate to describe how individual beings experience the war distinctively. Margaret Chatterjee comments on the fate of various characters in the epic who experienced the war, might exemplify something universal and would be worth discussing (Matilal, 2014/1989). It is not just a story of war for most Indians, but an event that is believed to have happened in Indian peninsular thousands of years

ago. Irawati Karve observes that Mahabharata is not an imaginary story but represents a real event which took place about 1000BC (Karve, 2025(1969): 1). This epic would give us a broad canvas where we could understand and describe the experiences of war. And that would provide us with various debates of ethics, power, gender, emotions and reasons involved in a war zone. That would also facilitate us with a conceptual discussion of the aspects of a war, may it be of modern or ancient time. Exploring these aspects might enable the human beings to approach the war in a different perspective to develop equanimity and equality for ending war situations eventually. Though there are various material problems prevailing in the social and personal life of human beings, the issues related to individual human mind are to be taken seriously to address the issues of war, to avoid wars and attain equanimity and thus derived peace in life. The world has witnessed the individuals such as Hitler in the Western scenario to understand that, individuals as social actors might bring harm to others due to the lack of equanimity and that could even end up in World Wars. There are also Emperors such as Alexander the Great, that we could find in European history, who fought wars for more and more power. In Indian history also we can locate Kings and Emperors who fought for power and prosperity of their kingdom.

In the context of Mahabharata, we could make a conceptual investigation of the collage of countless characteristics of a war, by analyzing the experiences and emotions of the characters. Wendy Doniger, the Indologist says, though primarily about kings and their battle, the epic of Mahabharata is peopled by members of all four *varnas* of ancient Indian society on which the caste system overlaid (Doniger, 2024:11). Among the four classes or *varnas* that are explained as *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Shudra*, the Kings are *Kshatriyas* but all other category people are thrown in different ways into the war initiated by the kings. Simultaneously some of the kings are also described as emotionally confused, as if they are carrying a thrown sense. For example, Arjuna

becomes bewildered in the battlefield with a dilemma on how he could kill his *guru* (teacher) and elder relatives who are in the enemy group. The moral dilemmas experienced by Arjuna, Draupadi and other characters in Mahabharata are well explicated by various reading on the text (Matilal, 2014/1989). The men as leading *Kshatriya* Kings in both allies, men of other *varnas* and the women of all sections experience the war in different ways. The Husserlian concepts of ‘witness’ and secondary experience, would contribute immensely in understanding these situations and mental states of female characters and humans other than the Kings who initiate the wars. The situations that throw the kings or rulers themselves into that action and the ‘falling prey’ phenomenon that different other human beings experience are to be dissected for understanding war. The thoughts, emotions and various mental states of human beings that cause wars are examined here with reference to Heideggerian discussion of ‘thrownness’. It is obvious that ‘thrownness’ as a term by Heidegger could be taken commendably to make clarity on this tussle, and to innovate problem solving through understanding the phenomenology of war.

## **II Thrownness of Being or *Geworfenheit von Dasein***

Heidegger uses the term *Verfallen* which is meaning ‘thrownness’, in his 1927 book *Sein Und Zeit* to discuss the ontology of ‘being’ as to falling like a prey in the world. The book was translated from German as Being and Time by Joan Stambough to give us this English one-word of Thrownness for his description of Dasein as Falling Prey in the life-world (2010 Edition). Falling Prey or Thrownness or *Verfallen*, is also termed as ‘entanglement’ of *Dasein* while being-in-the-world, through its everydayness (Heidegger, 2010;169). Falling prey determine not only the being-in-the-world existentially for Heidegger, but the turbulence reveals the character of throwing and the movement of Thrownness. He explains the force of throw, would also entail the Attunement of Dasein with the worldly circumstances. Attunement is described as the essential feature of Dasein. ‘What we indicate ontologically with the term

attunement is what is most familiar and an everyday kind of thing: mood, being in a mood.’ (Heidegger, 2010:130). Attunement is actually the way people attempt to attain and maintain harmony in the lived-world situations where they are cast with no choice otherwise. This situatedness of being-in-the-world of the ‘being’ or Dasein, could be understood in various contexts of our mundane life. This is ostensive to the mood swings that people face in such situations in any society. Heidegger explains, Dasein evades the being that is disclosed in moods in an ontic and existential way (Heidegger, 2010:131). This is an ontologically and existentially unveiled Dasein. ‘We shall call this character of being of Dasein which is veiled in its whence and whither, but in itself all the more openly disclosed, that ‘that it is’ the thrownness (Geworfenheit) of this being into its there; it is thrown in such a way that it is the ‘there’ as being-in-the-world. The expression of ‘thrownness’ is meant to suggest the facticity of its being delivered over (Uberantwortung) (Heidegger, 2010:131-132). So, the attunement discloses Dasein in its thrownness for Heidegger. Thus, he elaborates the way in which the Being come into existence as Thrownness or a Falling Prey (Heidegger, 2010:169-173). Idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity are characterized as the way in which Dasein is ‘there’ in everydayness of being-in-the-world.

There are other aspects of the thrownness that is discussed to understand in-depth about the being-in-the-world. The thrownness would entail the inauthenticity of the ‘being-there’ or Dasein, which would be curious, anxious, tempted and tranquilized. In idle talk and public interpretedness, Dasein presents itself with the possibility of losing itself in the ‘they’, of falling prey to groundlessness’ that is to say, Dasein prepares for itself the constant temptation of falling prey (Heidegger, 2010:170). The self-certainty and decisiveness of the ‘they’ increasingly propagates the sense that there is no need of authenticity. We could observe people even misunderstand this decisiveness of ‘they’ or the system in which one has plunged or thrown, as authenticity itself. The ‘fall’ of the Dasein fallen prey, is from a purer and higher ‘primordial condition’ (Heidegger,

2010:169). Falling Prey is existential determination of Dasein itself. From a state of already fallen away from itself and fallen prey to the 'world', to inauthentic from the authentic potentiality for being a 'self' (Heidegger, 2010:169). It is also notable that the 'reassurance' (Beruhigung) from 'they' to Dasein, for which everything is in 'the best order' and for whom all doors are open, is tranquilizing (beruhigend). The entangled being-in-the-world, tempting itself, tranquilizing in inauthentic being does not seduce one into stagnation or inactivity (Heidegger, 2010;171). When Dasein is tranquilized and understanding everything even the foreign cultures and synthesizing them with one's own might lead to thorough enlightenment of Dasein about itself. Then it drifts toward an alienation in which its own potentiality for being-in-the-world is not only tempting, tranquilizing, but it is at the same time alienating (Heidegger, 2010;171).

We can find both ontological as well as epistemological aspects of being in the world, with reference to Heidegger. Ontologically it is to explain the nature of 'being', as thrown into a mode of existence or to some or other situation which is not of its choice. For example, being a German or Indian is not the choice of a human being initially. There are many such matters on which we cannot have a choice. Being born into any caste, community, class or gender could be understood in this way of thrownness, that gives a facticity of identity. Thus, Dasein's thrownness leads to facticity which is the totality of circumstances in which we find ourselves thrown. Heidegger posits epistemological dimension of thrownness by saying that, our understanding is essentially situated and so limited by the context and tradition into which it is thrown. (Withy, 2011). Katherine Withy observes that this situatedness does not exhaust Heidegger's concept of 'thrownness', and identifies different kinds of finitude or limitation in our understanding. Several ways are there in which we confront and carry different dimensions of our past, making understanding or the knowledge limited within the situatedness and thrownness. Heidegger's account of our thrownness, and its first-

personal manifestation in our attunement, contests such understandings and points to an account of responsibility that does not find its locus in the power of the subject (Cowles, 2018). The many ways of being cast into existence would be bringing the responsibility to fulfil many duties related to that locus. Cowles argues that a Heideggerian account of responsibility should be understood in terms of attention or attentiveness, a notion that is developed through phenomenological analysis. Such an analysis according to Cowles (2018), demonstrates how our thrownness speaks against seeing responsibility for our being-in-the-world in terms of choice, rational judgement, or wholeheartedness. A further analysis of anxiety, contrasting with accounts which read it as manifesting a privileged space for freedom and self-determination, emphasizes the revelation of the subject as essentially bound to what is beyond it.

Heidegger doesn't take it as subjectivity as such, and he thought subjectivity and objectivity are not separable. If the objectively presented 'world' of objects is wielded together with a subject, is a problem to be understood. Not all objective presence is objective presence of 'things'. For example, he draws our attention to 'nature'. There is nothing like an object called nature, but it's our 'care' what gives us it as objectively present. Thus, it becomes a reality. In case, the term reality serves designate innerworldly beings, then handliness and objective presence function as modes of reality (Heidegger, 2010:203). Falling prey or thrownness is an existential determination of Dasein itself and says nothing about Dasein as something objectively present, or about present relations to beings from which it is 'derived' or to beings with which it has subsequently found itself in a *commercium* (Heidegger, 2010:169). The essential ontological structure of Dasein is revealed by the understanding of thrownness. Far from determining its nocturnal side, it constitutes all of its days in their everydayness (Heidegger, 2010:172). The phenomena in everydayness pointed out of temptation, tranquilizing, alienation, and self-entangling characterize the thrownness. This is also called by Heidegger as 'plunge' (absturz). Dasein plunges itself into

inauthentic everydayness, groundlessness and nothingness. But this plunge remained concealed from it by the way things have been publicly interpreted, so that it is interpreted as ‘getting ahead’ and ‘living correctly’ (Heidegger, 2010;172).

The thrownness of being could also be realized as in its temporal aspect. The Being or Sein is a kind of Da-sein since its thrown as Being-there. Heidegger says, the temporality and related interpretation and discourses are presupposed by the understanding of Dasein with idle chatter, curiosity and ambiguity in everydayness (Heidegger, 2010:330). As he placed Dasein as attunement, and it as constitutive of care, ‘thrownness’ or ‘falling prey’ has its existential meaning in the ‘present’ (2010:330). Ontologically speaking the being of Dasein is as care, for the world it is thrown to. Epistemologically speaking, with ‘curiosity’ Dasein starts perceiving (Vernehmen) to let what is at hand and present (Vorhanden) be bodily encountered with regard to their outward appearance; And this letting something be encountered is grounded in a present (Gegenwart) (2010;331). And for Heidegger, this making present that gets tangled up in itself, curiosity has an ecstatic unity with a corresponding future. The curiosity entails awaiting, arising possibility of something real, and that explains the existential and temporal condition.

### **III Thrownness and the Being-there in Battlefield: Understanding War with the Epic of Mahabharata**

Temporally the world itself is thrown into a situation of endless wars around. To understand the phenomenology of War that we face while being-in-the-world, we could employ the aspects of thrownness as explained by Heidegger. The reality of war, and the realities behind the war, are experienced by one ‘self’ as being-in-the-world. The worldliness and the inner-worldliness of Being, would explain both these aspects consecutively. Since there are many wars going on in the existing world scenario, it is worth taking a story of war to understand the phenomenology of war. Indian epic of Mahabharata could be interpreted

mainly as a plot of war between cousins of a kingdom, which deals with various lived-world experiences and situatedness. The story of Mahabharata is also considered as a real historical event in Indian territory, and that contributes to understanding war in many layers. In spite of its uncertainty about history and reality, one could take the written text as making meanings of relationships that end up in war. Rajagopalachari, one of the initial translators and commentators on Indian epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, claims that the realities of life are idealised by genius and given the form of literature, and thus literature is closely related to life; so long as the human family is divided into nations, literature cannot escape the effects of such division (Rajagopalachari, 1958). This effect which could be also understood as impact in its negative way, leaves similar kind of a division of people in accordance with *Varna* in ancient India, which is much accepted by these ancient texts. Though not in the same form of the ancient *Chaturvarna*, there are many divisions with related concepts among people, that cause war like situations.

The 'Being' as kings or as *kshatriyas* also could be understood as thrownness in its fundamental ontology. The discussion of mental affairs and thus the consciousness and meaning making in the battlefield, brings in the issues of 'attunement' within the *Varna* system that eventually led to the war. We could observe that it is to uphold *dharmā*, which is to keep the harmony in *Varnasramadharmā* system, the war was fought by the Kings who are the *kshatriyas* of *varna* system. The children of two brothers King Pandu and King Drutharashtra developed a fighting mentality which eventually ended up in a war. The five sons of Pandu known as Pandavas and the other team of hundred sons known as Kauravas, are described as ethically binary categories of good and evil. The Kauravas inheriting the kingdom and the Pandavas experiencing the expulsion from Kingdom, would show the development of anxiety, curiosity, tempting, tranquilizing and alienating of thrown beings, resulting in the phenomenon of war. The 'thrownness' or 'falling prey' to

the battlefield was experienced by individual consciousness of both parties, though differently. In its worldly aspect, they were not experiencing the war in the same way, as they were all depicted as the *kshatriyas* and kings. Kauravas' consciousness would claim a kind of authenticity as they made the choice of war willingly creating the plot. Especially in the cases of virtuous Pandavas, they were led to the battlefield by a kind of situatedness. They were experiencing as thrown to the situation of war due to the existing *dharma* concept of the *varna* they belonged to. We could see the phenomenon of this thrownness in the sense of Heidegger's explanation of the *Dasein* or 'being there', with the consciousness analysis of individual actors' mental states in this war scenario.

There is no other character in the narration of Mahabharata to compare with Arjuna to understand the experience of curiosity and anxiety in thrownness of being, in the war context in detail. Bhagavad Gita is a part of Mahabharata, where the smartest of the five Pandava kings, Arjuna starts worrying how he would kill his elderly relatives and teachers who taught him to use the weapons. Arjuna loses temper and stops in the battlefield without being able to accept the situation where he should kill his dear and near ones. He eventually makes meaning out of the advice by the Lord Krishna, about his duty as a *kshatriya* to win the war. The experiences of war becomes a severe training for Arjuna to attain the state of *Sthithaprajna* by controlling mental affairs that would drag into anxiety or curiosity about what he was doing in the battlefield. The self of Arjuna 'being there' in the battlefield goes through anxiety, curiosity, and doubts the temptation and tranquility in fighting war to become an authentic being. Being-in-the-world of war, the *Dasein* doesn't attain 'attunement' with an inauthentic entanglement in the thrown world of the war. But his consciousness goes back to the self and revisits the thrownness or falling prey of 'being-there' in the battlefield. Eventually Arjuna finds the *Sthitaprajna* state of mind, to do the duty of *Varnasramadharm*a by being-in-the-world as thrown to the situation.

This could be called as an alienated mental state, according to Heideggerian explanation.

The purpose of the war and persuasion to engage within a war could be described and made sense in many ways with reference to the characters in the epic. Bhagavad Gita has been a celebrated text in India for the purpose of advising people to do their duty. But the people who cherish the advices of Lord Krishna do not really understand it as promoting violence in a way by persuading Arjuna to involve in the war in Kurukshetra. B.K. Matilal (1989) opines that the meaning of *dharma* in the Indian philosophical debates is still more subtle to understand, and we might have to engage it in epic literature to see '*dharmasya tatvam nihitam guhayam*' (the truth of dharma lies in the dark cave). It is obvious from various characters that they experience as thrown into the war at many instances and that situatedness bothered them intensely. The moral dilemma experienced by the people who engage with the war zones are evident from the characters in Mahabharata. The individuals who instigate the war would also experience the thrownness into dilemmas though distinctively from other beings who are not agents in decision making for executing a war. The experience of war for some male characters as Kings in Mahabharata could be identified as intentional as well as thrown. Most of the other male characters are cast into the battlefield so that they are left with no choice other than taking up the arms and fighting the war. Especially the virtuous Pancha Pandavas were portrayed as situationally driven to the battlefield. This kind of process in which enemies being created by the persons who wish to entangle with war, happens at any historical period anywhere.

The eighteen-day war in the epic Mahabharata happened at the end of numerous hate mongering lifeworld situations. And, no matter what the individual 'beings' thought on the *dharma*, they are falling prey to the battlefield. It also elucidates how the human being experiences the thrownness even in the middle of the battlefield while the war is going on. This phenomenon of being cast into the situations where one finds no

meaning or authenticity, is evident in various characters of Mahabharata. Those who might fall into mental troubles, and attempt to attain the concept of being *sthithaprajna* as advised by Krishna, would be definitely a good option. And, it would be less perplexing if we take it out of the context, to extract that idea of being such a controlled mind to do some peaceful activity rather than war. But people set out to do war or violence, just to save the pride of once identity, community, kingdom or country. In modern times there are no such kingdoms and *chaturvarna* division. Though there is no *chaturvarna* to make people hierarchically ordered into *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya*, *Sudra*, there are many more types of divisions among people with reference to class, caste, gender, ethnicity, region and religion. Thus, what constitutes the duty or harmony, becomes a great issue to be understood phenomenologically.

Such literature, based ideas are openly discussed for making it clear that the concepts could be extracted to solve our present day contextual problems of war. The liberation that the intersubjective engagement could provide would ensure the capacity to analyse their thrownness in the larger social structures under which they were feeling stressed or suffocated. This would also assure the state of *sthithaprajna* or controlled mind, but not for fighting the war but to keep equanimity instead of enmity towards the people involved in their life-world. It is good to understand the state of consciousness for avoiding the possible violence in between the individuals or groups who are entangled. Once we enable ourselves to identify the thrownness into the hostile atmosphere, humans could intentionally engage in intersubjective dialogues to avoid the given war situations. The exchange of words or speech in intersubjective engagements and human testimony could make the people responsible for their activity (Moran,2018). And the responsibility of one's own action developed through the intersubjective engagements as well as testimony could even scrap the thrownness that creates wars.

### **III Secondary Experience and Witness: The Other Beings and the War**

The idea of ‘witnessing’ (*zeugenschaft*) explained by Husserl provides pertinent points in understanding the phenomenon of war in-depth. The experience of the ‘other’ beings, and the experience of the actors of war are not the same. The agony caused to some human beings by the acts or events instituted in the life-world is to be taken up while we try to understand the phenomenon of war. Experience by women, children, elderly parents or relatives, who are not directly present in the battlefields and yet they undergo the tension of fighting the war. For example, strong female characters in the Mahabharata could be understood as witnessing the war. Their secondary experience through their male-counterpart during the war, makes them witness. They witness the war from outside the battlefield, but they are still feeling responsible for the war in their engagements with the testimony by men. They get a kind of secondary experience of the war through their men who give the account of what happened in the battlefield every other day.

Various readings of Husserl opine that by the term ‘witness’ he meant either a transcendental onlooker, or a secondary experience through testimony. Here I would prefer to take the ‘witness’ as of testimony to understand the phenomenon of war, that explicates the secondary experience of people who engage intersubjectively. Moran (2018) elucidates that the exchange of words is a philosophical exploration of human testimony, specifically as a form of intersubjective understanding in which speakers communicate by making themselves accountable for the truth of what they say. Witnessing is also understood as testimony, and the ‘engagement’ or *Bezogenheit* that is expounded as a basic characteristic of testimony. This gives us the ideas of intersubjectivity and the secondary experience through intersubjectivity. (Heiden, 2021) elaborates elements of witnessing with reference to Husserl. Accordingly, the witness could be of testimony and the four elements of testimony are, subject matter, witness, act of testifying, and the

addressee. The testimony is said in many ways, without being homonymous and that contemporary epistemological approaches to testimony are not capable of accounting for all paradigmatic forms of testimony (Heiden, 2021). By emphasizing the sense of ‘engagement’ as a basic characteristic of testimony, we may find another approach to testimony that offers a phenomenological alternative to the observational model of witnessing and the accompanying conception of testimony as report (Heiden, 2021).

Similar points could be referred from interpreters such as Duncan Pritchard (2004) and later Michele Averchi (2023) who talk about the epistemology of testimony and Husserl’s notion of secondary experience as an alternative basis for social epistemology. Pritchard discusses the way of the intentional transfer of a belief or custom from one agent to another, in the usual way of verbal assertion made by the one agent to the other, or in writing. This intentional engagement of transferring belief in *kshatriya dharma* could be seen in the Mahabharata that would even cause war eventually. Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandava brothers, has been depicted as persuading the husbands to fight the war with Kauravas who had humiliated her by disrobing publicly at the dice game platform (Karve, 2025). After the defeat of her husbands in the dice game, Draupadi had to experience the insulting cores of dialogues with the Kaurava elder brother Duryodhana who eventually ordered dragging her to the podium to undress her as enforcing the status of a slave. The experience made her consciousness about ‘being a wife’ that changed as ‘being a slave’ since all her five husbands became slaves. This is also resonating an argument that takes testimony in real life situations as social epistemology (Heiden,2022). In this situation, it is contestable if she herself became the testimony or the others who did the violent warlike act of undressing were the testimony in its familiar sense of using the term. ‘The staged tension between the familiar and the estranging approach to testimony concerns the subject matter of testimony – that is, what the testimony is about – as well as the discursive genre of testifying.

In the epistemological case, the subject matter of a testimony is a fact or a belief communicated by testimony; its discursive type is the report in which propositions about this subject matter are disclosed to addressees and which these addressees can, subsequently, interrogate or investigate critically' (Heiden,2022). Then it is further worth investigating the argument that Draupadi's consciousness was raised to the level of a 'transcendental onlooker' played by Krishna, who gave her dress not being drained in the disrobing battle.

The consciousness analysis in Indian thought and that of German idealism and post-Hegelian phenomenology are compared and differentiated by some Indian philosophers such as J N Mohanty (Maharana, 2009). The phenomenology of consciousness in Husserl's writings and in Advaita Vedanta are compared by a scholarly analysis to understand the transcendental onlooker as similar to *Sakshi Chaitanya* in Sankara Vedanta (Maharana,2009). Accordingly, the idea of 'witness' or the transcendental onlooker, could be conceived as somewhat similar to *Sakshi* (which means witness) explained in Vedanta. One could comprehend that such philosophical background is brought in Mahabharata by placing Krishna as such a witness. This is again expounded in the war canvas of Bhagavad Gita where Krishna acts like a witness as well as agent for Arjuna to fight the war by raising his consciousness to the level of a transcendental onlooker. It is explained as a mental state called *sthithaprajna* in which nothing is affecting the consciousness while being-in-the world. Not only Arjuna and Draupadi, but some other Kings and some Queens in Mahabharata are also portrayed in a way to show how one could reach to the level of such an onlooker, not affected by the worldly feelings while fighting a war.

But the transcendental entity appeared in the real-life situations and experiences of Kings and Queens in the Mahabharata war story, is the character called Krishna the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Hildebeitel (1990) claims the epic literature of Mahabharata is not just mythical in genre and it should be studied as part of the Indo-European epic

continuum. The onlooker Krishna who appears and disappears mysteriously while Draupadi needed the help while being undressed by her husbands' enemies, makes sense of the transcendental debate of Husserlian phenomenology in a way. In his book *The Ritual of Battle*, Alf Hiltabeitel argues the Krishna of Mahabharata sometimes takes us beyond India to mythic and epic traditions of other Indo-European people (Hiltabeitel,1991). However, Krishna in the epic Mahabharata gives an excellent example for the idea of transcendental onlooker propounded by Husserl's phenomenology, who is a witness and phenomenon capable of making others also a transcendental entity who could be playing like a witness even while thrown and entangled into the battle field experience.

#### **IV Concluding Remarks**

Phenomenology had been intense in the analysis of experiences that human beings have in the life-world. And it is done through describing how the consciousness makes meaning about the experience. Before that historical phase of phenomenology, both empirical philosophers and rationalist have seriously deliberated over the aspects of mind, self, self-realization, suffering, liberation etc. in a conceptual way. That is to say, philosophers have deliberated upon these facets in a metaphysical and epistemological way from ancient time. A phenomenological approach benefits a bit differently to understand the mind and life of people with a discussion of consciousness and mental states. To address the pathetic situatedness of human beings in a life-world issue such as war, a phenomenological approach contributes considerably. The concept of war and the issues related to it, have been investigated in this article by describing the experiences of individual beings thrown into it. This is done essentially enough through the characters of Mahabharata, the Indian epic of stories around a war.

It is obvious that ‘thrownness’ as a term used by Heidegger could be taken effectively to make clarity on this scuffle, and to innovate problem solving through understanding a phenomenology of war. The emotions or mental states of human beings that cause wars, are examined here with reference to the situations that different human beings are thrown into. Husserlian view of secondary experience and ‘witness’, bounce an enormous account of the ‘other’ entities than the Kings who fight the war in the battlefield. This investigation might emulate more clarity in understanding the concept and practice of war within the socio-political situations of power hierarchy. And this clarity might reduce our increasing inability to cultivate peace and empathy by avoiding wars. Edith Stein, a student of Husserl has investigated the experience of empathy within the phenomenological approach (Borden, 2003). The discussion of empathy reveals the individual layer and layers related to others in experiencing empathy. The same arguments are applicable in experiencing war as well, which is a product phenomenon due to the lack of empathy and equanimity.

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