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An Inquiry into Our Collective Past: A Comparative Analysis of Irawati Karve's *Yuganta* and Devdutt Pattanaik's *Jaya*

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Abstract: 'What is there can be found anywhere else, but what is not there cannot be found elsewhere' claims the Mahabharata. Several writers have reviewed the Mahabharata and probed the minds of iconic male and female characters and have combined facts with fiction. A comparison of *Yuganta: The End of an Epoch* by Irawati Karve and *Jaya* by Devdutt Pattanaik is undertaken in this paper. These texts have uniquely retold the Mahabharata and offered the reader a fresh perspective. This paper is an attempt to compare the texts and bring about similarities and contrasts in terms of structure, content and style.

Introduction

Karve an anthropologist studies the humanity of the Mahabharata's great figures with all their virtues and their equally numerous flaws in *Yuganta*. In *Jaya*, Devdutt Pattanaik a qualified medical doctor, has seamlessly woven into a single narrative, plots from the Sanskrit classic as well as its many folk and regional variants.

Raymond Williams emphasizes that "the traditional culture of a society will always tend to correspond to its contemporary system of interests and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation" (*The Theory of Criticism*, 415).

The 'selection' and 'interpretation' will certainly be conditioned by the vested political interests of the dominant group-race, class or gender- to present a particular 'image' of the past to the future, so as to rationalize its political moves. Hence history manipulates the cultural material and in doing so, it strikes a parallel with myth and legend.

By drawing from the above reference, both the authors in their works dealt with in this paper have tried to present truth objectively as found in the source texts (mentioned below). They have presented contemporary society as existent in the times in their works and also how history has manipulated cultural material by bringing to light later interpolations i.e a

move from the Critical Edition in the case of Irawati Karve and by his incisive comments on myth and society by Pattanaik.

They have both in their own unique way tried to deconstruct the cultural history of the nation by rewriting the dominant myths. Pattanaik specifically has also simultaneously presented the local tribal myths. Thus in a way they have both resisted the dominant historiography and have countered it with an alternative folk historiography drawing from oral histories, folk songs, folk-lores and legends.

To succinctly sum it in Irawati Karve's words, "I am indeed fortunate that I can read today a story called *Jaya*, which was sung three thousand years ago, and discover myself in it." (*Yuganta- The end of an epoch-The End of a Yuga*-pg 217)

Structural Comparison:

To compare the texts structurally, **Yuganta** –The end of an epoch is a compilation of essays on the grand epic. Originally written in Marathi, the English version doesn't include the foreword written by Norman Brown. A part of the author's preface has been adapted though. The chapters 2-11 are exact same as in the first edition. These essays are based on the Critical Edition¹ of the Mahabharata published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Jaya by Devdutt Pattanaik varies vastly in structure as compared to *Yuganta*. The text is basically episodic, beginning with the Author's Note-titled *What Ganesha Wrote* : dealing with the origins of the epic. Later, the author has divided the work into books based on broad themes like ancestors, birth, education to name a few. Here the author clearly mentions his source texts i.e the epical retelling being based on both Sanskrit classic as well as its regional and folk variants and the text being firmly placed in the context of Puranic worldview. He establishes at the very beginning that it is shaped by his own prejudices as well as the demands of the modern reader.

The resemblance that can be found with the original text of *Yuganta* in Marathi and Devdutt Pattanaik's *Jaya* is the presence of line drawings. Line drawings are made on the fly leaf preceding each chapter based on the photographs of sculptures in temples in the Marathi edition of

Yuganta. Devdutt Pattanaik has also very creatively included line drawings that very graphically represent the themes in the epic.

One more point of similarity is both the authors are very detailed in their presentation of the epic-Irawati Karve very pointedly making references to later interpolations and Devdutt Pattanaik has left no stone unturned in referring to folk tales and other relevant information to make the epic more appealing and pertinent to current times.

Comparison and contrasts based on the content of the texts:

Before drawing a comparison and contrast between these texts on the basis of content. The stance adopted by these writers has to be made clear at the outset. Through Jaya and Yuganta, both Devdutt Pattanaik and Karve like Mahasweta Devi have:

1. Re-examined the dominant nationalist history and exposed its elitist bias by focusing attention on the neglected and marginalized locations.
2. They have counterpoised the personal histories of the individual subaltern² with the broader socio-political-economic historical context.

Ranajit Guha calls the history of Indian nationalism “a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite.” According to him this kind of historical writings are prejudiced as these fail to acknowledge and explain the contribution made by the masses. The subalternists problematise the ideological appropriation of history and make an attempt to highlight the contribution of the subordinate classes and groups in the making of history.

Traditional historical discourse is fraught with gaps and absences. The gaps are a product of the process of marginalisation. Revision and rewriting aim at filling these gaps by making an attempt to bring the margins to the center. Like Devi, Karve and Pattanaik make an attempt at rewriting the historical “givens” by depicting in their writings the struggles of the marginals against oppression and discrimination by the mainstream elite.

By commenting on the tribals’ position, the varna system and struggle of the illegitimate progeny in their works as also the status of women and

transsexuals they reinscribe the marginalized history of the subaltern into the national/postcolonial historiography.

This can be enumerated through various contexts:

Comparing introduction to the texts:

Irawati Karve's observation is that Vyasa is not the original composer of the Mahabharata, but as the name Vyasa (an arranger of information) suggests, he is credited only with the compilation of the epic. He might have taken the story from Suta bards (Sutas were the illegitimate progeny of the Kshatriyas) and put them in an order. Here she clearly credits the Sutas, as a source of the grand epic. Pattanaik has credited Vyasa-son of a 'Fisherwoman' with the creation of the story:

“Vyasa classified the hymns and created four collections- Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. On completing this monumental task, Vyasa had this inexplicable urge to write a story, one that would convey the most abstract of Vedic truths to the simplest of men in the farthest corners of the world in the most concrete of forms.”
(Jaya-pgxii –What Ganesha Wrote)

Also “The Characters of Vyasa's tale were people he knew. The villains, the Kauravas, were in fact his own grandchildren.” (Jaya-pgxii –What Ganesha Wrote)

According to Irawati Karve Mahabharata was thus compiled by Vyasa. He played a part as well as an eye witness of many of the events. It was originally called Jaya, a story of a king over his rival kings men. People have been adding to it over the ages. So we have our present Mahabharata.

Karve has in her introduction mentioned the principal narrators. A feature of stories in Sanskrit literature is that they are narrated by many people; wherever opportunities arose in the words of actual actors. The story of Mahabharata starts in the Naimisha forest where Rishi Shaunaka is performing a ritual that is supposed to go on for twelve years. A famous storyteller Ugrashrava (a suta) comes along sharing about his wanderings and relates the story of king Janamejaya, who performed a snake sacrifice (sarpa satra) to avenge the death of his father at the hands of naga

Takshaka. The sacrifice is cleverly stopped by Naga Astika. Sage Vyasa appears at the site and asks Janamejaya to give up the sacrifice and idea of revenge. Janamejaya wants to know the exploits of his ancestors, this job is done by Vyasa's disciple Vaishampayana. This point onwards the story is told as narrated by Vaishampayana to Janamejaya.

The battle portion is narrated in the words of Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra. The principal narrator being Ugrashrava telling the story to a point followed by Vaishampayana in turn followed by the third narrator Sanjaya, after the battle portion Vaishampayana takes over.

Devdutt Pattanaik also begins with the sarpasattra or snake sacrifice. He has in fact, given a detailed version of various narrators. Vyasa narrated it to Ganesha, his disciples Jaimini, Vaisampayana and Suka his parrot headed son. Vaisampayana narrated it to Janamejaya and Romaharshana. Romaharshana to Ugrashrava (a sauti). Suka to Parikshit on his death bed. Four birds present on the battlefield of Kurukshetra to Jaimini.

Karve points out to the story within a story mode of narration of literature in Sanskrit. This form is later adapted by The Arabian Nights. Thus a small sapling it grew into a vast tree. It was about an idea that changed and it came to be known as Vijaya. Before long it became not about any idea but about a people so it was retitled Bharata-story of the Bharata clan.

According to Pattanaik the epic reached its final form in 300 CE .

Devdutt Pattanaik's bias towards the transsexuals:

Pattanaik at the beginning of the retelling mentions clearly that his personal prejudices will affect this retelling. Pattanaik throughout the retelling, empathises with the transsexuals, he credits the genealogy of the Kauravas and Pandavas to the union of people who are themselves neither completely male or female or even both as in the case of the story of Ila.

This bias is clearly evident from the first book onwards- titled Ancestors , where a reference to Budh, lord of planet Mercury is made. He is a shape shifting being ,cursed to be neither male nor female due to the

curse of his father Brihaspati brought upon him, due to the transgression of his mother Tara (Brihaspati's wife). Biologically he is Chandra's son but brought up in the logical Brihaspati household.

The ancestor Budh neither male nor female finds a spouse in Ila who was both male and female. Together they had many sons. Ailas descendants of Ila. Chandravamsis descendants of the moon. Scathingly Pattanaik comments:

“The Chandravamsis would forget the gender ambiguity of Budh and Ila and mock it in Arjuna's brother in law Shikandi. They would stop him from entering the battlefield such is the nature of man-made laws ignorant of the past and insensitive to the present.” (Jaya-Book 1-Ancestors-pg14).

Pattanaik thus credits the ancestry of the Kuru line through these two beings .

This bias towards people of the third sex is seen throughout the retelling. The reference to the sacrifice by Iravan (son of Arjuna and Ulupi- a Naga princess) at the Kurukshetra war and the re-enacting of his sacrifice ritually where he becomes the divine husband of all men who have womanly feelings is a case in example. Such men being locally known as Alis and being identified as homosexual transvestites spend separate lives from main stream society. “Through Iravan's mythology, the existence of those who call themselves Ali is acknowledged, explained and validated.” (Jaya-Book 15-War-pg 248).

He also mentions that Iravan's marriage and Shikhandi's participation deal with sexual transformation and gender ambiguity. Both Iravan's sacrifice and Shikhandi's participation take place midway i.e on the ninth and tenth day of the war, until whose occurrence, the battle is indecisive. Only after these events occur does the battle approach a conclusion.

Pattanaik thus gives a great deal of importance to the presence of these individuals and the important momentum provided to the otherwise stagnant Kuru Kshetra battle.

This bias and point of view is not seen at any place in Irawati Karve's Yuganta .It is unique to Devdutt Pattanaik.

Discrimination based on caste, class and birth: Bringing the marginalised to the centre:

All through both the works there are references made to various tribes. The Nagas for instance are said to have an ambiguous status, sometimes feared sometimes worshipped. These non-human races were non-Vedic tribes that were gradually assimilated into the Vedic fold.

Pattanaik suggests that Nagas could be a tribe that followed early form of democracy .They could be the descendants of the Indo-Greek settled in India following the invasion of Alexander.

Pattanaik traces their genealogy to Yayati's curse; he mentions that Yayati's elder son- Yadu(cursed by him to never be king, nor his descendants)married a Naga woman. This marriage resulted in the descent of various tribes by the name of Andhkas,Bhojakas, Vrishnis etc.Collectively these descendants were called the Yadavas. This claim is supported by anthropologists,who believe that the Nagas referred to in the epic were actually settled agricultural communities who worshipped serpents who they regarded as guardians of fertility.

An interesting observation is made by Pattanaik in this context ,where he relates a Tamil folk tale, which deals with an attempt at eliminating Bhima was made by the Kauravas which was nearly successful. In the nick of time Bhima was saved by Naga Vasuki.Assumed dead by everyone a funeral feast is arranged a fortnight later to mark the end of the period of mourning. Preparation for food was made and Bhima emerged.Not wanting the spices and vegetables to be wasted,Bhima offered to cook a special meal,indicating his new life. This dish prepared out of mixing of coconut milk, spices and vegetables is the famous Tamil dish known as Aviyal. This was different from a typical Vedic dish, where mixing of vegetables was prohibited. (Jaya-Book Five –Castaway-75).

He also mentions some folk versions stating that during his stay with the Nagas,Bhima was given a Naga wife. The son he bore was called Bilalsen or Barbareek ,Similarly several such sons born out of Rakshasa

and Naga women did participate in the Kurukshetra war.(Jaya-Book Five-Castaway-pg 75)

Irawati Karve in the essay titled-The Palace of Maya throws light on the Aryan colonization. The building of Mayasabha provides us a glimpse into how the newly arrived Aryans want to displace the Nagas-the older inhabitants of the land. The huge forest fire of the Khandav Prastha and the satisfying of Agni, with the fat of the animals in this forest is a myth perpetuated to sanctify the act of colonization of the forest by the Pandavas ,thus expanding their kingdom without encroaching upon other Kshatriyas. And taking over the Khandav Prastha originally inhabited by the Nagas. This actually depicts the Aryan take-over of the original inhabitants of the land. This rivalry leads to the Sarpasattra- the three-generations long feud, where the story of the Mahabharata begins.

Karna although born of Kunti and Surya's union(supposedly),is railed against as a low- born throughout his life. Karve questions his bravery, as he backs out at crucial moments when his help is required.At the time of Draupadi's swayamwara ,when a fight breaks involving Bhima and Arjuna versus the others, he does not involve himself mentioning that he wouldn't fight Brahamanas.At the time of the Ghoshayatra i.e counting all cattle in the kingdom, the attack on the Kauravas by a Gandharva, witnesses Karna fleeing for his life. Karna gives great importance to his own pride before the good of his own friend Duryodhana, by blindly promising to protect the Pandavas except for Arjuna,during the great war. According to Karve, Karna possesses the ability, unfortunately not the training to be a true Kshatriya!.

Half sons like Yuyutsu and Vidura have no status in court. They are sutas (half Kshatriyas and half sutas).Karve comments that this class is born to bear the burden of its own. She further pleads their case by enumerating that-Arjuna's son gets Hastinapur,Krishna's grandson gets Indraprastha and Yuyutsu has to compromise with nothing.

The **Nishada Ekalavya** is not allowed to learn archery.Pattanaik draws our attention to the fact that the Nishadas were outside the three-tiered society comprising Kshatriyas, Brahmanas and Commoners.The Nishadas were forest dwellers.They were treated with disdain. There are clear signs of prejudice against those outside or at the bottom of the

society. They were forbidden from learning archery.(Jaya-Book Four-Education-pg 65)

The ill effects of the break down in the varna system:

This theme is handled by Irawati Karve in the essay Paradharmo Bhayavaha: where she mentions two important Brahmins who did not behave like Brahmins. They were Drona and his son Ashwatthama. Instead of learning brahminical lore they became experts in the use of arms. Karve feels they are excellent examples of the loss of smriti i.e consciousness of one's self and the consequent forgetting of their dharma and perpetuating adharma.

Similar thoughts are echoed by Pattanaik who expresses that "Ashwatthama embodies what happens when the rules of varna are not obeyed. Born to a priest, he is supposed to live as a priest as per ashrama – dharma. But instead he chooses to be a warrior, not to protect the weak but to harness power. That is why he is not shown any mercy by Krishna. He embodies the fall of civilization and the height of human rage and greed." (Jaya-Book 16-Aftermath-pg 296).

The epic is seen as a time of great flux where some rishis gave up spiritual practices and wielded arms while on the other hand kings embraced spirituality.

The Position of Women:

Women's Sexual Rights?

The chastity of women was elastic during the Mahabharata times, later it became rigid. This statement by Karve sums it all. Even during the times of the Mahabharata a definite shift is seen in the position of women. Devdutt Pattanaik suggests the power that women like Urvashi, Ganga and Satyawati wielded in the Mahabharata in the earlier times as against the treatment of Amba, Ambika and Ambalika as chattels; who could be won as trophies by men.

Devdutt Pattanaik refers to Shvetaketu who is the fountain head of patriarchy. Before he introduced the law of marriage, women had full sexual freedom. In fact, a woman could go to any man and a man who refused her

was deemed a eunuch. This freedom was allowed because child birth was considered of prime importance to facilitate the re-entry of the forefathers into the land of the living. Shvetaketu insisted on fidelity from women so that all children knew who their biological fathers were. (Jaya-Book Three-Birth-pg 48)

If a man was impotent, sterile or dead, the woman was allowed to go to other men with the permission of the husband or his family. The number of men a woman could approach was fixed at three. Including the husband it could go up to five. However, if she went to a fifth man, she was deemed a whore. Draupadi was called one by Karna.

Devdutt Pattanaik suggests the sexual exploitation/hospitality prevalent in society, as evident in the cases of Satyawati and Kunti. Satyawati had to give in to the sexual advances of Sage Parashara out of whose union Vyasa was born and Kunti had to do the bidding of Sage Durvasa out of the union of whom Karna was born.

Women and Politics:

Devdutt pattanaik through the story of the ancestor Satyawati suggests the prevalence of politicking and discrimination.

Satyavati, one of the twins (a daughter and a son), was born out of King Uparichara and Girika's union. The boy was taken by the king and the daughter Satyawati later known as Matsyagandha was handed over to fishermen. The daughter was beautiful but a foul smell emanated from her body. Sage Parashara's union with her assured her of smelling good forever, bearing an instant child with virginity intact at the end of the union.

Devdutt Pattanaik insists this injustice meted out against Satyawati by her biological father, resulted in her insisting on her son being the heir of the kingdom and putting this as a condition for marrying Shantanu thus depriving Devavrata (Bhishma) of his rights and causing the Mahabharata!

Devdutt Pattanaik has thrown light on the fact that Kunti was aware of palace politics, she never divulged her pre-marital secret (Karna's birth). Madri's number of sons were calculatedly kept at two, by her. She forced Draupadi to marry all five brothers to keep them united and not cause any

sexual jealousy between them. Adhering to this logic, even today Todas in South of India and certain other hill tribes have one kitchen and one daughter in law irrespective of the number of sons in the family!

According to Karve, Kunti was born to endure sorrow 'As a spendthrift squanders his money unthinking, so did my father, give me away when yet a girl to his friend.' (Yuganta-Essay 4-Kunti-pg 43). Every man in her life contributed to her sorrow. She was a true Kshatriya woman, never ever did she think that riches and ease were necessary for the happiness of Kshatriya woman. She was never impartial to the sons of Madri. She ensured Madri wouldn't have more number of sons than her to qualify as chief queen.

It were Kunti's harsh words that goaded Yudhishtira to fight the battle of Kurukshetra. The story of Vidula as told to Krishna reveals the spirit with which the mother goads the dormant Yudhishtir to fight against the Kauravas. Devdutt Pattanaik has brought about an effective parallel between India's struggle for freedom against the British and Vidulas story, urging her sons (Mother India's sons) to vanquish the enemy.

The essay by Karve on Gandhari clearly depicts the betrayal of Gandhari. Her choice to blindfold herself is a revenge against the king. Devdutt Pattanaik has also made a reference to the Bhil Bharata where Kunti and Gandhari are seen as a form of mother goddess Shakti.

Draupadi an Enigma!

Draupadi and Sita are compared by Irawati Karve. Draupadi is called Nathavatianathavat (having husbands but like a widow) (Yuganta-pg 91-Essay 6-Draupadi). After the Jain purana, it is Draupadi who is blamed for causing war, she wanted it, but Karve says as true inheritors of Indian Patriarchal Society, that they were the Pandavas were hardly men to bow down to the wishes of their wives.

Irawati Karve has pointed out Draupadi of the Mahabharata was a faithful wife. Draupadi's sensitive pride, her willingness to sacrifice herself, her faithfulness to her husbands were the qualities appropriate to her country, time and clan.

Devdutt Pattanaik points out exactly this through the Theyyam dancers of Kerala who tell the story of black magic used by the Kauravas to destroy the Pandavas while they are in forest. Each of their attempts is foiled either because of the grace of Krishna or the power of Draupadi.(Jaya- Book Eleven-Exile-pg161).

The story of Draupadi's love for Karna has been mentioned in the Jambhul Akhyan(a tale about human imperfections)(Jaya-Book Eleven-Exile-pg184),by Devdutt Pattanaik, it has been effectually negated by Irawati Karve,who mentions that it is a interpolation from a later Jain Purana.

Irawati Karve in her essay on Draupadi points out that her daily behaviour towards the Pandavas showed great restraint,she however laughed at a person she should have respected,her greatest mistake /pretentiousness was her display of knowledge at a time she should have begged for mercy.

In the treatment of Draupadi as chattel,Devdutt Pattanaik has given a version of the Bhil Bharata,a version of Mahabharata from the Dungri Bhil community in the northern parts of the Gujarat state,who claim descent from Rajputs-there is a tale of the Pandavas being asked to find a man who is sold by a woman,before they can proceed with a particularly powerful yagna. Bhima offers to find such a man he wanders the earth but finds no such man as no woman is ready to part with her husband. They tell him that a husband is like a jewel , who makes a woman more beautiful,that cannot be given away.Finally,Bhima is directed to a courtesan,who is willing to part with one of her customers as she doesn't care for the ones who chase her.This tale compiled by Dr. Bhagwandas Patel seems like an expression of folk outrage on the gambling of Draupadi by the men who were supposed to protect her. They treated her as chattel ,not as wife.(Jaya-Book Ten-Gambling-pg 150)

Irawati Karve compares Mahabharata with Greek Illiad where goddesses had more power, they were more vibrant and portrayed vivid roles, this could be the influence of the neighbouring matrilineal Egyptian society.

The Yayati Complex in the Mahabharata:

Puru is the son of Yayati who takes on his (Yayati's) curse on his head and suffers for him. As a reward in spite of being younger than Yadu(the elder son), Puru bequeaths the throne. Yadu the elder son is cursed since he refuses to suffer for his father, also along with him are his descendants cursed to never be kings.

The Yayati Complex comes into being with this background. It has an Indian world view where the father demands and secures a sacrifice from the son. It is the older generation thus, that dominates the society explaining the stranglehold of tradition over modernity in Indian society. Bhishma is also a sufferer of the Yayati complex. "Bhishma's vow is yet another example of the Yayati complex-glorification of the son who sacrifices his own happiness for the sake of his father." (Jaya-Book Three-Birth-pg 34).

Irawati Karve has referred to Bhishma in the first essay titled- The Final Effort where she has dealt with the past life of Bhishma, and the curse out of which he is born as Devavrata. The sacrifice of Devavrata is mentioned, however the high-light of the essay is how Bhishma is cursed by Amba in the first generation. Kunti, Gandhari and Madri in the next generation. In his zeal to perpetuate the Kuru house, he had humiliated and disgraced these women. Karve expresses "How all these women must have suffered! How they must have cursed Bhishma! He alone was responsible for their humiliation." (Yuganta-Essay One-The Final Effort-pg14)

The entire sham of Bhishma's self-sacrifice is systematically dispelled by Irawati Karve, firstly in his choice of Vyasa to continue the line. Vyasa- a sage, was no threat to his authority, therefore would not jeopardise his authority and he could also remain true to his vow. So he was selected to continue the Puru Line.

His refusal to retire even after Duryodhana took over depicts his thirst for power. He accepted the Kaurava generalship, probably a last attempt to bring about peace among the warring cousins, his argument with Karna and keeping him out of the war till he was alive, was perhaps a way of protecting the Kauravas and Pandavas!

Karve questions him as a warrior too! As there is no war that he has to his credit during his long career as statesman. Pattanaik has not been so caustic about Bhishma. Chivalry was dead this was confirmed with the

behaviour of seniors like Bhishma at the disrobing of Draupadi and quoting scriptures at that critical time!

Stylistic Comparison:

Comparing these texts on the basis of style, both these works are embellished with unique literary devices. Devdutt Pattanaik's *Jaya*, is a very lucid read due to his seemingly simplistic and appealing style of presenting the Mahabharata. *Jaya* is enthralling as it is accompanied by very interesting snippets of information enclosed at the end of every chapter.

In fact, the critic Bibek Debroy feels that “..this is probably the most important USP, this isn't a straight abridged retelling of the Mahabharata. There are several explanatory boxes that help understand the context. It is these boxes that are the richest part of Devdutt's rendering and these make it different from a pedestrian retelling of the story.”(What economist, Bibek Debroy, has to say about “*Jaya*”)³.

On the other hand the anthropologist, Irawati Karve has the reader dazed by drawing a comparison between the Critical Edition and later interpolations that are used as cover up for protecting the characters or perpetuating myths related to them.

Conclusion:

These texts are indeed a treasure house of information about our past. They help us in getting closer to our origins. By objectively handling the stories of the marginalised and juxtaposing it against those of the main stream, these works have surely led to a great deal of awareness and empowerment! Of course, there is a lot more to dwell upon-as regards the Mahabharata. To sum it up in the words of Devdutt Pattanaik, who claims that this retelling firmly remains rooted in his belief that:

“Within infinite myths lies the Eternal Truth,
Who sees it all?
Varuna has but a thousand eyes
Indra, a hundred,
And I, only two.”
(*Jaya*-pg xv-Author's Note-What Ganesha Wrote)

Notes and References:

1. Explanation to the Critical Version: What Economist, Bibek Debroy, has to say about “Jaya”.Nov 25, 2010. There were different regional versions of the Sanskrit Mahabharata too, more than 1000. Pune’s Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute started a mammoth exercise in 1916, ending in 1966. A group of scholars examined all the 1000-plus versions and produced what they believed to be the authentic text, shorn of subsequent interpolations. This is known as the Critical Version. Many popular stories do not figure in this critical version, such as Vedavyasa dictating to Ganesha or Krishna saving Droupadi when she was being disrobed by Duhshasana. However, beliefs and myths do not necessarily adhere to a Sanskrit cum authenticated scholarly version, a point made in a slightly different context by Wendy Doniger in her study of Hinduism.

2. The term ‘subaltern’, originally used by Antonio Gramsci for ‘proletariat’ and other working class groups, refers to the condition of general subordination in terms of class, caste, age, gender etc. In the late 1970s, a group of young historians including Ranajit Guha, Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman and Gyanendra Pandey – together formed the Subaltern Studies Group to hold discussion about the contemporary state of South Asian historiography. Their Subaltern Studies series expresses a general dissatisfaction with the historical interpretation of the ‘Freedom Movement’ in India which celebrated elite contribution in the making of the Indian nation while denying ‘the politics of the people’. Subaltern studies aim to fill in important methodological and historiographical gaps and more recently, has come to question the rigidity of Marxism and other dominant schools of academic historiography.

3. What economist, Bibek Debroy, has to say about “Jaya”.Nov 25, 2010.

4.Pattanaik Devdutt-Jaya-An illustrated retelling of the Mahabharata. 2010.Penguin Books India.

5.Karve Irawati-Yuganta-The end of an epoch.1991.Disha Books,Orient Longman India.

6.Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution, excerpted in The Theory of Criticism, ed. Raman Senden (London: Longman, 1988) 414.