

Sunjata

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sunjata and people of Mali Heroic or epic poems depict the ethos and culture norms of a nation. Greek epics, Iliad and Odyssey described the exploits and adventures of their heroes who even sacrificed their lives for the glory of their nation. Virgil's Aeneid is also written in the same vein and is the epitome of ancient Roman culture. Sunjata or Sundiata is a western African epic which throws light on the struggle and adventures of Sunjata amid the conspiracies and powerful enemies. It suggests that heroism is the mixture of strength, patience, kindness and respect for one's old traditions and values. The world depicted in Sunjata is deterministic world where the supreme being has already carved the destiny of the heroes. The common people's destiny is attached to the fate of the hero.

In this world, supreme virtues are one's love for one's history and one's cultural conventions. The hero is generous, forgiving and kind. Hospitality, being kind to one's elders and doing good to others are the ideals aspired by Sunjata and his people.. Sunjata and his mother are welcomed at Ghana and Mema because Maghan, the father of Sunjata, did some favour to the people of these areas and now they were returning the thanks to the family. Even the childless king Moussa Tounkara wants to make Sunjata his heir due to his remarkable abilities.

Destiny is already planned in Sunjata's world. Even though the child of King Maghan is not able to walk, yet he is destined to be a king. As the griot, Balla Fassdka says, " God has mysteries which none can fathom. You perhaps, will be a king. You can do nothing about it. You, on the hand, will be unlucky, but you can do nothing about that either. Each man finds his way already marked out for him and he can change nothing of it" (Niane 15). It is clear from the above given lines that creator has created the Mandingo people for

<https://assignbuster.com/sunjata/>

some special purpose and each one has to play his role as designed and planned by the creator. Predestination prevails in ancient Mali.

Souomaoro Kante is the embodiment of evil in the epic. He is the cruel king who possess magical powers and is the descendant of smiths. He has kept the griot, Balla Fassaeke and Sujata's half sister Nana Triban as hostages.

According to the griot," Soumaoro was an evil demon and his reign produced nothing but bloodshed" (Niane 41).

The questions about creator and the purpose of creation cannot be answered through an exclusive reading of the epic of Sunjata as the epic deals with the life and achievements of Sunjata and his people and their famous war with the magician king, Soumoro . In order to get answers regarding creator and purpose of creation we have to rely on source titled" Background to Epic of Sundiata" which gives us some information about the religion, culture and history of the people. Jones(2003) reveals that Faro is the all powerful God who has created everything. There are two types of sorceres, good or bad. In this culture gender roles are determined and male is dominant. The institution of family is very important and the loyalty to family is the highest virtue. The members of family are deeply connected to each other as we can see the strong bond between Sunjata and his mother. The people of this society are cooperative, hospitable and kind. Friendship in this society is very important and friends help their child playmates in the time of need as we can see the Sunjata was aided and supported by his friends in his war against the evil magician.

Works Cited

Niane, Djibril T, David W. Chappell, and Jim Jones. Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali. Harlow,

<https://assignbuster.com/sunjata/>

England: Pearson Longman, 2009. Print.

Jones, Jim . "" Background to the epic of Sundiata Keita"." " Background to the epic of

Sundiata Keita". West Chester University, 1 Jan. 2003. Web. 19 Apr. 2014.

.