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## **Definition Attempted**

The *marthiya* resembles a dramatic tragedy in many respects. It resembles the tragedy in construction. At the heart of it is a dramatic conflict that defies resolution on the social plane. The tragic flaw of the hero is that he is flawless\_too good for the world. The action is portrayed in graphic details with changes and surprises. The dialogue has the modulations of dramatic dialogue, typical at once of the situation, of the character, of the interlocutors, and of the poet's art.

But it is very different from a tragedy in the technical sense. It is not meant for stage representation. The hero is not beset by tragic loneliness\_he belongs to a universe more real than any other

Though it raises the issue of human destiny, the idea of fate; excluded by too lively a conscience in the presence of God throughout. The catharsis of a tragedy leaves one, in some sense, a sadder and wiser person, but it is lacking in some positive elements, like the sense of communion and the sense of satisfaction, which are essential ingredients of the overall impression left by the *marthiya*.

Nor is the *marthiya* obviously an epic. It does not narrate\_it presents. But the battle that it presents is epic in significance and to some extent in magnitude as well. The hero has epic stature, although the poet emphasizes his very human aspects. And like the epic it unfolds a whole civilization, its mores and manners, its values and morals, its philosophy and worldview.

Though not a very wise thing to do, a working definition of the *marthiya* may be attempted somewhat in this way.

Constructed out of a repertoire of Karbala' stories, the *marthiya* is a complete and integrated presentation, in the suitable poetic form, and through the cultured language, of an action or episode portraying confrontation and the conflict of good and evil, and the tragic death of the hero, in such a way that feelings of exaltation and adoration are aroused for the hero or heroes, and feelings of hatred and execration for the villains, and a bond of communion and partnership are all established through congregational mourning, thus providing a cathartic pleasure proper to the *marthiya*.

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