

Tracing the Literary and Symbolic Significance of the Messenger through History

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By

Mohan Gopinath

Editor Dr. Sabina Zacharias Ph.D.

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For Chinnam and my parents and to a treasure trove of memories

—MG

WHAT READERS SAY....

“I found this book relating to the humble messenger really fascinating.”

—Dr. Dolphy M. Abraham, Independent Researcher and former Professor and Head of the Doctoral Program, Alliance University, and former Dean, St. Joseph’s Institute of Management, Bangalore.

“Intriguing and well written...”

—Dr. MJ Sridhar, Founder ERMG Management Consultants.

“Superb exposition on the role of the messenger; I found it of great value.”

—Dr. Vinod Vyasulu, President, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND EDITOR

Dr. Mohan Gopinath Ph.D.

Mohan Gopinath holds a BA (Hons.) degree and a Master's degree in English Literature from St. Stephen's College – Delhi University, where he later joined as a member of the faculty. In between, he joined the Indian Police Service which he quit after one week. After the two-year stint in the college, he joined the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, and worked as a senior-level banker for almost 21 years in India, the UK and Hong Kong, after initially completing a two-year training attachment in the London branch of the bank. Subsequently, he left the industry and worked for a doctoral degree which he obtained from Osmania University on the topic, Organizational Learning (in the banking industry). His career in HSBC also included an attachment to the all-India HR function.

After obtaining his doctoral degree, Mohan worked as a management consultant in India and the Middle East. He has also worked as a lead consultant for a World Bank-funded Institutional Development Study conducted for the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department.

He reverted to academia after working as a consultant for more than one decade and joined as the Dean of St. Joseph's Institute of Management, Bangalore. He later shifted to the Alliance University's School of Business, Bangalore, where he worked as a Professor in the Department of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource till September 2019. His areas of interest are leadership, management of change, conflict resolution, banking, and protection of the environment. He has written and published papers and case studies across a range of subjects (Banking, Organizational Behaviour, Human Resource, Finance, the Environment, and the Performing Arts). He is also a keen tennis enthusiast.

Mohan has conducted Management Development Programs for senior managers in his areas of specialization in the organizational development area in India and the Middle East. His first book was co-authored and titled Business Drama: How Shakespearean Insights Help Leaders Manage Volatile Contexts. His interest in Kathakali (he has trained in Kathakali

music and sung for many performances) led him to write (in 2015) *The Actor Who Could Connect: the Genius of Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair*. This book was selected by the American Library of Congress for inclusion in their database and also exhibited at the Paris World Book Fair in March 2019. The book was later completely revised and expanded and published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle in 2022 under the title, *Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, The Mozart of Kathakali*. His other theme based book on Kathakali and Shakespeare is *Vignettes Relating to Kathakali and Shakespeare: the Thirasheela versus the Curtain*. The last book in the trilogy is *Shakespeare Meets the Indian Epics: Comparative Themes and Interpretations*. All three books are published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle.

Dr. Sabina Zacharias Ph.D. - Editor

Sabina Zacharias has been teaching English Language and Literature, Cultural Studies and Business Communication to multicultural/multilingual groups at different levels in India and abroad for the last 20 years. She completed her doctoral degree from The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) in Hyderabad on the topic ‘Re-reading the Legends of Kerala: the politics of legend-making’ from a caste and gender perspective and also analysed its representations in film adaptations and fictional narratives. She has presented and published several research papers, edited and co-authored in the areas of English Literature, Cultural Studies and Communication. Currently, she is engaged in online teaching and academic content writing. Her other interests include volunteering for community service and working on Education projects for social change.

Books Written by Mohan Gopinath

Shakespeare Meets the Indian Epics: Comparative Themes and Interpretations, with Sabina Zacharias

Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, the Mozart of Kathakali

Vignettes Relating to Kathakali and Shakespeare: the Thirasheela versus the Curtain, with Vellinezhi Achuthan Kutty, Nagesh Bharadwaj and Asha Prabhakaran

Jim Collins’s Leadership Levels Spiced with Shakespeare, with Sabina Zacharias and Suprabha Bakshi

Managing Human Foibles and Human Dilemmas

Team Roles: through the Eyes of Shakespeare and Dr. Meredith Belbin

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator: a Shakespearean Validation

Why People Fail: Through the Eyes of Shakespeare and Sumantra Ghoshal

Leadership Nuances in Shakespeare's Plays

Fiction - Double Oh Seven (for private circulation only)

The Actor Who Could Connect: the Genius of Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair **(this book was selected by the American Library of Congress for inclusion in their database and exhibited at the Paris International Book Fair in March 2019)**

A Nocturnal Interlude

Memoir – Does the Spearmint Lose its Flavour on the Bedpost Overnight?

Business Drama: How Shakespearean insights help leaders manage volatile contexts, with Debashish Sengupta and Ray Titus

Books Written/ Edited by Sabina Zacharias

Edited a book of Essays as part of the National level Essay Contest - Vision India 2022 commemorating the 85th Birth Anniversary of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (2018). IFIM College Bangalore.

Edited a book - Business Ethics - Caselets for the Classroom, Dr. Karanam Nagaraj Rao and CA Sindhuja Bhaskara (2019). Delhi: Bookwell

Co-authored a book with Dr. Mohan Gopinath and Prof. Suprabha Bakshi - Jim Collins's Levels of Leadership: a Compilation of Leadership Profiles. (2021). Chennai: Notion Press.

Published a book chapter - Refiguring history, historiography and legend: the politics of subversion in Kerala legends in the book 'Marginalization in Literature' - Critical perspectives, (2021). Delhi: Authors Press

Chief Editor for a book – Vignettes Relating to Kathakali and Shakespeare: the Thirasheela versus the Curtain. (2022).UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Editor for a book – Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, the Mozart of Kathakali. (2022).UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Co-authored a book with Dr. Mohan Gopinath - Shakespeare Meets the Indian Epics: Comparative Themes and Interpretations (2023). UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

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MG

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

*Enter Leonato, Governor of Messina, Hero his daughter,
and Beatrice his niece, with a Messenger.*

LEONATO, I learn in this letter that Don
Pedro of Aragon comes this night to Messina.

MESSENGER He is very near by this. He was not three
leagues off when I left him.

LEONATO How many gentlemen have you lost in this
action?

MESSENGER But few of any sort, and none of name.

LEONATO A victory is twice itself when the achiever
brings home full numbers. I find here that Don
Pedro hath bestowed much honour on a young
Florentine called Claudio.

MESSENGER Much deserved on his part, and equally
remembered by Don Pedro. He hath borne himself
beyond the promise of his age, doing in the figure
of a lamb the feats of a lion.

—William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act 1, Scene 1

A Note - The Importance of the Earlier Quotation

Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* is a comedy filled with love, deception, and miscommunication. Within this intricate web of plotlines, the character of the messenger plays a crucial role. The messenger serves as a conduit for information, advancing the narrative and driving the story forward. He or she acts as a catalyst for action, a bearer of news, and a device for dramatic irony.

Catalyst for Action

The messenger in *Much Ado About Nothing* acts as a catalyst for various events in the play. A messenger's primary function is to deliver important information, setting the wheels of the plot in motion. For instance, in Act I, Scene 1, the messenger informs Leonato that Don Pedro and his troops will be arriving at his residence. This news prompts Leonato to make preparations and sets the stage for subsequent encounters, leading to the introduction of the other characters.

Additionally, the messenger's role as a catalyst is exemplified in Act II, Scene 1, where they relay the false information to Claudio that Hero has been unfaithful. This revelation sparks Claudio's rage and prompts him to publicly shame Hero at their wedding. Thus, the messenger's timely delivery of this news serves as the impetus for significant conflict and drama, driving the central conflicts of the play.

Bearer of News

Throughout *Much Ado About Nothing*, the messenger plays a crucial role as the bearer of news, carrying vital information between characters. Their role extends beyond simply conveying messages; they often become active participants in the unfolding drama. For instance, in Act II, Scene 3, the messenger relays Don John's false accusation against Hero to Leonato, Claudio, and Don Pedro. This pivotal information creates a ripple effect, leading to doubt, mistrust, and a chaotic turn of events.

Moreover, in Act V, Scene 2, the messenger informs the characters of Borachio's arrest and confession, revealing the truth behind Hero's innocence and vindicating her. This news restores order and resolves the conflicts that had plagued the play. Thus, the messenger's role as the bearer of news becomes instrumental in unravelling deception, rectifying misunderstandings, and ultimately restoring harmony.

Device for Dramatic Irony

The messenger in *Much Ado About Nothing* also serves as a device for dramatic irony. Their delivery of information to characters often contradicts what the audience already knows, creating tension and anticipation. This dramatic irony enhances the audience's engagement and enjoyment of the play.

For instance, in Act III, Scene 1, the messenger informs Benedick of Beatrice's supposed love for him, unknowingly perpetuating the ruse conceived by Beatrice and her friends. The audience, aware of this deception, witnesses Benedick's internal conflict and amusement, adding a layer of irony to the scene. This dramatic irony not only serves as a source of comedic relief but also deepens the audience's understanding of the characters and their relationships.

It will be useful to expand on the role of the messenger in this play a little bit more as it can serve to lay a foundation of what is to follow. The role of

the messenger is vital in driving the plot forward and facilitating communication between characters. Messengers serve as intermediaries, conveying information, delivering letters, and often becoming unintentional catalysts for misunderstandings and comedic situations. Their duties encompass much more than simply relaying messages; they act as messengers of love, deception, and reconciliation, playing an essential role in the intricate web of relationships in the play.

One of the primary duties of the messenger in the play is to transmit messages of love and affection. For instance, early in the play, Claudio employs a messenger to express his adoration to Hero, the daughter of Leonato. The messenger acts as a conduit for Claudio's romantic feelings, allowing him to declare his love without directly facing Hero. This role highlights the messenger's function as a bearer of emotions, providing a means for characters to express their deepest desires and sentiments.

However, the messenger's role is not limited to carrying messages of love. In the play, messengers are frequently involved in miscommunication and deception, unknowingly causing chaos and confusion. For example, in one of the most crucial scenes, a messenger mistakenly informs Claudio and Don Pedro that Hero has been unfaithful. This misinformation leads to Claudio's public shaming of Hero at their wedding ceremony, contributing to the play's central conflict. Here, the messenger's role shifts from a conduit of love to a catalyst for deception, revealing the potential consequences of misinterpreted messages.

Another crucial duty of the messenger is to deliver letters, which often serve as vehicles for hidden intentions and secret alliances. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, letters play a significant role in the plot's development. The characters rely on messengers to deliver these letters, which contain crucial information that drives the narrative forward. For instance, when Claudio believes Hero to be disloyal, he confronts her based on a letter sent by Don John, who seeks to undermine the relationship. The messenger's role in delivering this letter exacerbates the miscommunication and mistrust between characters, intensifying the conflict.

Furthermore, messengers in the play act as catalysts for reconciliation and resolution. Once the truth about Hero's innocence is revealed, a messenger is dispatched to inform Claudio of her innocence. This messenger acts as an agent of truth and reconciliation, relaying the message that mends the broken relationships caused by deception. In this way, the messenger's

duty extends beyond mere delivery; they become instruments of resolution and harmony, restoring order to the play's chaotic events.

Additionally, messengers provide a comedic element to the play. Shakespeare often employs messengers to convey absurd or nonsensical messages, adding to the humour and wit of the play. These messengers might be incompetent or bumbling, unintentionally distorting messages and creating further confusion. Their humorous antics serve as a source of entertainment for the audience, highlighting the playful nature of the play's overall tone.

So the role of the messenger in this play is multifaceted and crucial to the development of the plot and the dynamics between characters. Messengers serve as intermediaries, delivering messages of love, deception, and reconciliation. They convey emotions, transmit crucial information through letters, and unwittingly contribute to misunderstandings and comedic situations. While their duties may seem straightforward, messengers play an integral part in the intricate web of relationships and communication that drives the narrative of the play. Through their actions, messengers exemplify the power of words, highlighting the potential for both connection and confusion that arises from the delicate art of delivering messages.

In short, the messenger's role is of paramount importance to the development and resolution of the play's plotlines. As a catalyst for action, the messenger propels the narrative forward, initiating significant events. Furthermore, as the bearer of news, they convey crucial information that shapes the characters' actions and decisions. Finally, as a device for dramatic irony, the messenger adds depth and engagement to the play, providing the audience with privileged information. Overall, the messenger's presence in *Much Ado About Nothing* highlights their indispensability and underscores the intricate nature of Shakespeare's storytelling.

FOREWORD

DR. M. J. SRIDHAR PH.D.

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR- ERMG MANAGEMENT
CONSULTANTS PVT. LTD., BANGALORE

It is a matter of delight for me to write this Foreword. When Mohan and Sabina (the author and editor of this book) first asked me to do so, I did not hesitate as I have known Mohan for a long time and knew that he was interested in writing on esoteric subjects such as the theme of this book; in fact our association is many decades old. He and Sabina have collaborated in the writing of many books and all of them have an unusual theme which raises the curiosity of the reader right from the beginning. As far as this book is concerned the messenger is a fascinating person as he or she is responsible for many behind the scenes activities in a play or novel or epic or long poem and serves to take the story forward without any hitch or obscurities. This book reveals the usual and unusual messengers who have lived out their time in these various genres.

The book is correctly positioned an academic book and is targeted mainly at the student of Information Flows and Communications which are important facets in our lives today irrespective of the industry we are working in. It is a very unusual book insofar as it is an exercise in detailing the fascination which people have for messengers ever since their childhood when they heard stories of messengers and how they helped save a situation. It then gives the reasons for this fascination which is the leitmotif which runs throughout the book. The messengers are good people and sometimes blessed by the Gods – hence the title. In brief, in a world where communication is often taken for granted, there exists a remarkable figure whose significance transcends mere conveyance of information. This book explores the profound importance of messengers who, through their unwavering goodness and divine-like qualities, become beacons of hope, catalysts for change, and symbols of enlightenment. It also makes ‘out of the way’ connections the messenger has, illustrating these connections with unusual examples. For example, in the James Bond series, Bond’s role as a messenger for his boss M (Sir Miles Messervy) the Head of the Secret Service often involves him (Bond) navigating complex interpersonal

relationships and diplomatic channels. He serves as a bridge between the intelligence community and external entities, such as foreign intelligence agencies, political figures, or even criminal organizations. His role as a messenger becomes a diplomatic dance, where he must navigate the intricacies of international politics, espionage, and personal agendas to achieve his mission objectives. The same applies for the roles of Sherlock Holmes and his biographer cum messenger, Dr. John Watson.

The book also looks at the importance of briefing a messenger and gives examples of how this is done. It then moves on and examines the messengers who existed in ancient times in the East and the West and then looks at the concept of information disorder in the present day which is exacerbated by the advent of computer related technology. Technological advancements have ushered in an era where messengers no longer require a physical presence to convey information. One of the many questions the book asks and answers is - should messengers who physically deliver messages get involved in the politics behind the message? And again, what would be the criteria on which messengers are chosen? There obviously can be differing views about this but the book argues correctly that the ideal messenger should be a neutral person. The involvement of human messengers in the contents of the message they are delivering, particularly in terms of getting into the politics behind the message, is a complex and nuanced topic and is very well tackled in the book which concludes by looking at how the role of the messenger has evolved over the centuries and how this will possibly change again in the future.

I am particularly happy that the book is very tightly focused and looks at the messenger and the romance this figure has held for people. For example, starting from our childhoods, the messenger is very much in our minds and as we grow older, we realise the importance of this role especially during times of conflict.

Overall, this is a book which has tackled the complex theme of the various avatars of the messenger extremely well and I wish the book all success. I also look forward to seeing more such books on unusual subjects which open the doors to a hidden world of excitement and romance and magic which is like watching a Walt Disney movie for the first time.

M.J. Sridhar
Bangalore

PREFACE

*“They are the messengers who run
Onstage to us who try to doubt them,
Fetching our fate to hand; without them
What would Sophocles have done?”*

The concluding lines of Muriel Spark’s poem *The Messengers* (1967) are a tribute to the role of messengers in Greek tragedy and perhaps, in all storytelling. Without messengers, the renowned dramatist Sophocles would not have been able to write his plays and we would not have been able to enjoy those masterpieces today. The messengers are the harbingers of news, good or bad and their arrival often marks a turning point in the story. They often bear the burden of delivering unpleasant news braving the trials and tribulations of the journey.

In today’s world overrun with texts, tweets and Emails, where information flows freely and communication appears to be effortless, the messenger is a fascinating figure. By examining various examples of the messenger typology in literature, history and mythology, the book ‘The Messenger: A Study of Literary and Symbolic Significance through History’ by Dr. Mohan Gopinath demonstrates that this fascination is not confined to any particular era but persists as a universal and timeless theme.

The significance of the messenger goes beyond the commonplace transmission of messages. From ancient scrolls to digital transmissions, the role and allure of the messenger remain steadfast. For centuries, these intermediaries have woven their stories through the fabric of our collective history, bearing tidings of hope, change and revelation. They are frequently endowed with divine-like attributes and therefore they could be considered the surrogates of God on Earth.

In this book with the engaging leitmotif of the messenger, the author embarks on a journey that spans the ages, cultures and genres of the world of communication. Dr Gopinath talks about the origin of the book which relates to the stories which his father used to tell him when he was very young and many of them had the vibrant presence of messengers as characters. *“My father would explain the important roles messengers played in the stories and he described how messengers were entrusted*

with the task of carrying vital news and information from one place to another, acting as a bridge between different characters and locations. My fascination grew with each passing word, and my imagination painted vivid pictures of these messengers dashing through lonely and forbidding hostile lands and bustling cities, delivering important messages. Unknown to me at the time, my father was giving me the first insights into management. So the telling and retelling of these wonderful stories must have made a deep impression on me for them to have surfaced after seven decades and spill over into the writing of this book.” (Reflections)

This book delves into the narratives of individuals who throughout history undertook the daunting task of conveying crucial messages often in perilous circumstances, ensuring the delivery of vital information to its intended destination. By meticulously documenting their struggles and unwavering determination, this book illuminates the extraordinary courage exhibited by messengers across different epochs – Hermes, the messenger of the Gods, Pheidippides, the Athenian runner, the British Pigeon Service of World War I, Agni from Indian mythology are some of the captivating accounts that run through the book.

In keeping with the choice of unusual themes that arouse the interest of the reader, Dr. Gopinath presents iconic characters from the world of literature who wear the mantle of messengers. For instance, James Bond, the suave secret agent created by Ian Fleming plays the role of the ultimate messenger on behalf of his boss M. In the words of Dr. Gopinath (*Introduction*) “*James Bond’s role as a messenger in the world of espionage therefore extends far beyond simply delivering messages. He acts as a vital conduit between his boss, M, and the intelligence community, transmitting critical information, resolving problems and ensuring the smooth operation of missions. Bond’s ability to navigate complex interpersonal relationships, his diplomatic acumen and his embodiment of the values of the British Secret Service make him an exceptional messenger.*” From the genre of detective fiction, Dr. Watson is chosen for analysis. Watson’s unique perspective as a close confidante and observer of Sherlock Holmes also contributes to his effectiveness as a messenger. The author says (*Introduction*), “*Watson’s ability to convey the intricacies of Holmes’ deductions and the nuances of his character enhances the readers’ understanding and appreciation of the detective’s genius, further establishing Watson as the ideal messenger for Holmes.*”

The narrator, the six-year-old girl, Scout Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, becomes the intermediary between the novel’s contents

and the reader, a quintessential role of a messenger—acting as an intermediary. Dr. Gopinath discusses (*Reflections*) how Scout talks about the people in Maycomb, Alabama, their prejudices, their attitudes to events and their fears and worries, “*in a way that is clear, concise and without ambiguity; these are essential characteristics a messenger should instinctively show when he or she is delivering the message.*” From the world of Indian epics, Shri Hanuman emerges as an exemplary messenger. He plays a pivotal role in the *Ramayanam* carrying messages between Shri Raman and his wife, Seetha, who had been abducted by the demon king Ravana. Throughout his journey, he encounters insurmountable obstacles - mythical creatures, powerful demons and treacherous landscapes. Shri Hanuman’s commitment to duty and selflessness serves as an inspiring example of the essential goodness found in many messengers. Dr. Gopinath remarks (*Introduction*), “*Despite his exceptional abilities, he [Shri Hanuman] never sought personal glory or recognition. His sole focus was on fulfilling his duty and serving the greater good. Shri Hanuman’s unwavering dedication to his mission, even at great personal risk, highlights the sacrifices and hardships that messengers willingly endure to ensure the timely and accurate delivery of crucial information.*”

Drawing examples from literature and mythology, the author discusses themes of management and leadership which can be guidelines for those in the domain of management, business and diplomacy - the way a messenger should be briefed, the need-to-know principle, the role of the diplomat as messenger – negotiator are some of these. The author also moves into the intriguing realm of supernatural messengers which play a significant role in some of the Shakespearean plays – the hints given by the Three Witches in *Macbeth* and the messages from the Ghost of Hamlet’s father to *Hamlet*. The role of letters in *King Lear*, the messengers appearing on the battlefield in Richard III and Viola as a messenger in disguise in *Twelfth Night* all highlight the messenger’s role in providing information and raising many complex questions as to the validity of what they are saying or whether the person hearing them should believe them. Then there are the revered messengers from the Indian epics. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Shri Krishnan is the ultimate messenger and he uses all his persuasive skills prompting Arjuna to act in the battle of righteousness against the evil forces. There are references to messengers and their celebrated roles from the pages of Indian Epics - the Sage Naradan, Brihannala (the disguised Arjuna), the Nara Simham avatar, Angadan, Jatayu, Sampathi, Visbhishanan and so on. The role of Vibhishanan shifting his allegiance from his brother Ravana to Shri Raman even endangering his life is an interesting instance of a messenger’s role mentioned in this book. The author details how these

characters performed their functions and reveals how without them the course of the events could have taken a turn for the worse.

Dr. Gopinath brings the concept of the messenger into perspective in the context of technological advances that are constantly evolving and changing in the present day. The need for physical messengers may diminish further as are witnessing the rise of autonomous vehicles and drone delivery systems, which could potentially replace human messengers in the future. The rise of social media, instant messaging and online communication platforms have made information transmission instantaneous and widespread. However, this has also given rise to detrimental consequences such as information disorder and dissemination of incorrect or misleading information. The author talks about disinformation, malinformation and misinformation in the cyberworld (as memes, morphed images and fake news). He substantiates his views through the analysis of case studies such as the British Petroleum Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Ukraine war and other relevant ones from the current world of politics and business.

The book concludes by looking at interstellar messengers and talks about Captain Kirk the commander of the USS Enterprise in the series Star Trek. As an ideal messenger with a visionary approach, ethical conduct and a commitment and continuous learning, he can inspire organizational leaders to navigate uncharted territories and shape their organizations into beacons of success. These thoughts encourage us to envision the awe-inspiring possibilities of interstellar messengers leaving readers with a profound sense of wonder and curiosity regarding what lies ahead.

Considering the continuous pace of technological advancements, the author envisages several potential new roles for messengers that may emerge in future – to facilitate communication and interaction between humans and advanced technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality and brain-computer interfaces. It can be used in raising awareness and driving action towards sustainability and environmental conservation. They can act as conduits for emergency during a humanitarian crisis, for bridging cultural and language barriers, facilitating effective communication and understanding across diverse communities and even interplanetary communication.

In the ever-evolving landscape of communication, what will remain unchanged is the importance of what is being communicated by any type of messenger. By weaving together diverse narratives and exploring the significance of messengers in various contexts, this book ‘The Messenger:

A Study of Literary and Symbolic Significance through History' invites readers to appreciate the timeless and evolving nature of this profoundly resonant motif - the messenger.

Dr. Mohan Gopinath is an erudite scholar and a dedicated researcher whose diverse interests across various domains have shaped the flow and unique perspective of this book. His distinctive ability to weave stories, narratives and characters to discuss ideas for wider academic inquiry and deeper reflection is commendable. We hope the readers find it delightful to partake in this journey in exploring the leitmotif of messengers in literature, history and beyond.

Dr. Sabina Zacharias

INTRODUCTION

GOD'S SURROGATE ON EARTH

I have been wanting to write this book for a long time as the idea of the role of the messenger has fascinated us and made us want to dig deeper into their importance including the role they play. We wrote a chapter titled *The Messengers of Fate* in our book *Shakespeare Meets the Indian Epics: Comparative Themes and Interpretations* (2023) published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, and this only whetted the desire to go into the subject more deeply. We are very grateful to Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle for allowing us to refer to this chapter and also quote from its contents in this book. We found the role of the messenger took on a life of its own as we started writing this book and what you now read is the product of a very long time spent in reading and analysing material from various sources. A few facts relating to how messages were sent (Holmes and Rorbach, 1983) and the types of couriers and messengers used in earlier times are given in order to put the role in its proper perspective. With all the technology we have now we are never 'out of reach', from mobile phones to computers. But how did people communicate before all that happened? Here are some of the ways our ancestors talked to each other.

Fact 1 - Prior to medieval times, there were several sophisticated methods of message dissemination, including the messenger systems of the Persian Empire, and the relay-runner system of the Inca state. When the Roman Empire dissolved, Western Europe began to rely less on state messengers and more on private arrangements made between groups and individuals. In medieval times, people needed access to information quickly. Rulers, papal envoys and diplomats were just some of those who needed to send messages. In medieval times, travel could be difficult, dangerous, costly and time consuming. Important people such as rulers, bishops and nobles had little time or inclination to travel with news or messages and so, would employ trusted messengers to act on their behalf. During the Middle Ages, towns, universities, monasteries and trading companies all had their own messengers, some of whom were protected by royal decree. The Papacy had its own courier system, in order to keep in touch with its clergy and

churches across Europe. Bishops were required to send regular messages through to Rome, and in return, received papal messengers from Rome.

Fact 2 - The best messengers were men who were fit and healthy and ideally had a knowledge of more than one language. Religious messengers needed a basic knowledge of Latin, for dealing with the Pope, bishops and abbots. In many cases, messengers traveling overseas, particularly to a foreign court, were expected not only to deliver their message safely but to obtain as much information about their surroundings as possible before leaving. This sometimes led to messengers being implicated as spies.

Fact 3 - In prehistoric times pictures were painted inside caves with paint made from dirt or charcoal mixed with spit or animal fat. They relayed stories of hunting, types of food, clothing and people. Storytelling was a way of passing information down from one generation to the next and stories about mythology, religion and history have been narrated by word of mouth. In addition:

- Smoke signals were popular with the Indians in the Americas and were a visual communication used to send messages to people over long distances.
- Drums were sounded when important announcements had to be made by people in dense forests. The booming sound would reach neighbouring areas and people would then gather to collect the information.
- In Africa, New Guinea and tropical America, the natives used this form of communication for centuries.
- Runners were highly trained and fit people who would sprint for miles to deliver messages.
- Pigeons were also used by postal services to send and receive letters.
- And the Egyptians invented their own picture language which was called hieroglyphics.

Fact 4 - Again, the Corps of King's Messengers (or Corps of Queen's Messengers during the reign of a female monarch) are couriers employed by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). They hand-carry secret and important documents to British embassies, high commissions, and consulates around the world. Many King's Messengers were retired Army personnel. Messengers generally travel in plain clothes in business class on scheduled airlines with their consignment. The

division's official name changes depending on the gender of the reigning monarch.

The safe passage of diplomatic baggage is guaranteed by Articles 27 and 36 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (*Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties*, 1969) and for reasons of state secrecy, the diplomatic bag does not go through normal airport baggage checks and must not be opened, X-rayed, weighed, or otherwise investigated by customs of a foreign state, airline security staff or anyone else. The only exception is if there is serious evidence that it might contain materials prohibited or controlled by quarantine in the destination state. The King's Messenger has the status of a diplomatic courier and cannot be detained by foreign governments. British diplomatic bags and King's Messengers do not benefit from these immunities in the UK, and HMRC has the right to examine UK diplomatic bags. The messenger and the messenger's personal luggage can be required to go through normal security screening.

Fact 5 - Overland mail and stagecoaches followed the covered wagon into the trans-Missouri West. Monthly government mail services were established from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe and to Salt Lake City in 1850. Thirty days were allowed for the one-way trip on each line. A similar service between Salt Lake City and Sacramento, California, began in 1851. These routes paid poorly, so only one team was usually employed for the trip. No way stations were maintained, making the carriers' journey lonely and sometimes perilous. Because of these limited facilities, practically all mail for California went by steamer, via Panama, with a thirty-day schedule from New York to San Francisco.

Fact 6 -The Concord stagecoach, manufactured by Abbot, Downing, and Company of Concord, New Hampshire, was the great overland carrier of passengers, mail, and express before 1869. Its frame rested on leather thorough-braces in lieu of springs and it accommodated nine passengers inside and others on the top. A team of four or six horses or mules powered the coach, which usually made a hundred miles in twenty-four hours. Although replaced by the railroad in the late nineteenth century, the stagecoach lived on as a symbol of conquest, progress and opportunity for Americans heading west.

In the write up on the importance of the quotation from *Much Ado About Nothing* given earlier, seven functions which a messenger plays can be identified. These are:

- Act as a catalyst for action.
- Become the bearer of news (probably the most important).
- Act as a device for dramatic irony.
- Transmit messages of love and affection.
- Deliver letters; especially from those who have formed secret alliances.
- Act as a catalyst for reconciliation.
- Provide a comedic element.

In the course of the chapters which follow we will be touching on all these and more roles the messenger plays.

So in brief, in a world where communication is often taken for granted, there exists a remarkable figure whose significance transcends mere conveyance of information. This book explores the profound importance of messengers who, through their unwavering goodness and divine-like qualities, become beacons of hope, catalysts for change, and symbols of enlightenment. Their exceptional qualities set them apart from ordinary messengers, elevating them to a revered status akin to that of celestial beings. As we delve into the realm of these extraordinary individuals, we embark on a journey that reveals the transformative power of their words, the impact of their actions, and the enduring legacy they leave behind.

In the following pages, we will delve into the essence of the character of these messengers and explore the depth of their goodness. Their goodness is not limited to the mere execution of their duty but extends beyond the superficial realm of communication. These messengers are embodiments of compassion, empathy, and selflessness, possessing an innate ability to touch the lives of those they encounter. Through their actions, they offer solace to the weary, inspiration to the disillusioned, and guidance to the lost.

The portrayal of these messengers as mainly divine figures serves as a testament to the transformative nature of their presence. We used the term ‘God’s Surrogate’ in the title of this book with deliberation as we wanted to bring out the almost God-like virtues present in most of these people. Their very existence becomes a source of hope and reassurance, instilling faith in the hearts of those who receive their messages. Whether carrying words of love, forgiveness, or redemption, they act as conduits for transcendental wisdom, reminding us of the inherent goodness that lies within humanity. Through their qualities, these messengers become agents of change. Their goodness possesses an inherent power to illuminate the

darkest corners of human existence, bringing forth transformation, reconciliation, and the restoration of harmony. Their words hold the potential to mend broken relationships, bridge divides, and awaken dormant virtues within individuals and communities. Furthermore, the divine persona attributed to these messengers sheds light on the interconnectedness of the human experience. They remind us of our shared humanity, transcending the boundaries of culture, language, and belief systems. In a world marred by conflict and discord, these messengers offer a glimpse of unity and a collective purpose, emphasizing the importance of understanding, compassion, and mutual respect.

The essential goodness of messengers is an often overlooked aspect of their vital role in communication. In countless tales and historical accounts, messengers have risked their lives to deliver important messages, displaying unwavering dedication and bravery in the face of unknown dangers. These unsung heroes play a crucial role in bridging gaps between individuals and communities, ensuring that information reaches its intended recipients, even at great personal peril. One such exemplary messenger from the Indian epics is Shri Hanuman, whose commitment to duty and selflessness serves as an inspiring example of the essential goodness found in many messengers. Shri Hanuman, a central character in the Hindu epic Ramayanam, is revered for his extraordinary strength, wisdom, and devotion. As a messenger, he played a pivotal role in the story, carrying messages between Shri Raman and his wife, Seetha, who had been abducted by the demon king Ravana. Shri Hanuman's unwavering commitment to his duty as a messenger and his willingness to face unknown dangers exemplify the essential goodness found in those who undertake this noble task.

One of Shri Hanuman's most remarkable feats as a messenger was his journey across the vast ocean to locate Seetha, who was held captive in Lanka. This perilous expedition was fraught with numerous challenges and dangers. Hanuman had to overcome his own doubts, fears, and physical limitations to fulfil his duty. Despite being a mighty warrior, he chose to embark on this journey unarmed and vulnerable, relying solely on his intellect and devotion to Shri Raman. Throughout his journey, he encountered various mythical creatures, powerful demons, and treacherous landscapes. His faith in the righteousness of his mission and his unwavering dedication to Shri Raman propelled him forward, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Shri Hanuman's courage and resourcefulness allowed him to navigate through these perils,

ultimately reaching Seetha and delivering Shri Raman's message of love, hope, and rescue.

Shri Hanuman's commitment to his duty as a messenger also extended beyond physical challenges. He displayed immense emotional intelligence and empathy, understanding the weight and significance of the messages he carried. He recognized the power of words to heal, inspire, and unite. In the face of Seetha's despair and anguish, Hanuman conveyed not only Shri Raman's love but also his unwavering commitment to her rescue. His ability to deliver these messages with compassion and sensitivity is a testament to the essential goodness of messengers, who often serve as conduits of hope and reassurance. Furthermore, Shri Hanuman's selflessness and humility are exemplary traits displayed by many messengers. Despite his exceptional abilities, he never sought personal glory or recognition. His sole focus was on fulfilling his duty and serving the greater good. Hanuman's unwavering dedication to his mission, even at great personal risk, highlights the sacrifices and hardships that messengers willingly endure to ensure the timely and accurate delivery of crucial information.

The story of Shri Hanuman serves as a timeless reminder of the essential goodness found in most messengers. Their selfless acts of courage, their unwavering commitment to duty, and their ability to bridge gaps and bring people together make them indispensable figures in communication. Messengers are not mere conveyors of information; they embody the values of trust, empathy, and integrity that underpin effective communication and human connection.

Throughout the pages of this book, you will encounter remarkable stories of messengers whose goodness is so profound that it evokes reverence and awe. Their stories will inspire us to strive for greater compassion, kindness, and integrity in our own lives. As we unravel the significance of their qualities, we will be challenged to reflect upon the power of our own words and actions, recognising the potential we possess to become messengers of goodness in our own spheres of influence. And the important thing we found out is that the relevance of the messenger can never fade away. Yes, the actual nuts and bolts of what he or she does will change because of the changes in technology but the essential function of the messenger (this is our view) will remain. He or she will continue to deliver information and we can learn from good messengers how these messages are to be delivered and draw from them lessons which we can use in our own working lives. They have to be completely neutral and objective in what they convey as the slightest hint of subjectivity can