

Temptations Caused by Lotus Eaters and Circe's Feast in Homer's "Odyssey"**Menakadevi.V** Department of English, PPG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.16789801](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16789801)

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Abstract

The comparison of food and literature reveals how these themes penetrate all human experiences. This paper examines the temptations of food and alcohol and their repercussions in Homer's Odyssey. Odysseus and his crew encounter the Lotus-Eaters, a tribe of people who live on an island and eat lotus flowers. Those who eat the lotus have no desire to return home and prefer to stay on the island, basking in the lotus' bliss. This threatens Odysseus' mission since his men risk growing arrogant and losing sight of their goal. In addition, the gang visits Circe's enchanted castle, which is a feasting site where Odysseus and his crew are enticed with lavish food and drink, resulting in temptation. Odysseus and his companions encounter the evil witch Circe on the island of Aea. Circe transforms the crew into pigs, but Odysseus defeats her sorcery with the help of the god Hermes and his own wits, forcing her to restore his men to human form. Circe then becomes Odysseus' ally, guiding him through the upcoming challenges and providing valuable information about his mission. This article explores the themes of change, temptation, and the importance of cleverness and resilience in the face of supernatural hardship.

Key Words : *Temptation, Self-control, Feast, Desire, Pleasure***Introduction**

An odyssey is a long and interesting journey that often includes hardships, discoveries, and personal growth. The term is most commonly associated with Homer's epic poems "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey," which are regarded key classics of Western literature. "The Odyssey," in particular, tells the story of Odysseus, King of Ithaca, and his hardest journey to his home from the Trojan War. Odysseus encounters mythological beings, faces countless hardships, and navigates the unexpected forces of gods and goddesses throughout the course of 10 years.

The story delves into issues such as heroism, cunning, devotion, and the intricacies of the human experience. Beyond its literary roots, the term "odyssey" has evolved to represent any epic or difficult trip, physical or metaphorical, involving considerable challenges and personal transformation. It's a literary concept that has evolved into a metaphor for the larger journey of life itself. People may use the term to describe their personal adventures, hardships, or self-discovery journeys.

The Lotus Eaters

In "The Odyssey," there is a famous feast that takes place in Odysseus' hall. The most famous feast is one organized by Penelope's suitors, who have taken over Odysseus' palace while he is away, believing him to be dead. They are fighting for Penelope's hand in marriage and using Odysseus's extended absence to feast and revel at his home. The feast is essential in the story because it sets the stage for Odysseus' return to Ithaca after a twenty-year absence. Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, infiltrates his own palace to investigate the situation. The suitors are shown as arrogant and contemptuous, and their feast becomes a metaphor of their mistreatment of Odysseus' hospitality. The feast culminates when Odysseus meets and defeats the suitors in a dramatic and violent manner with the help of his son Telemachus and a few faithful slaves. The feast then turns into a scene of retribution and justice, heralding Odysseus' return to his proper status as lord of his family.

"But I bade my men be quick and flay the ships, that we might take our meal
in peace and eat wine, which was sitting by in great jars, having been given
me by Maron, son of Euanthes, the priest of Apollo, who was our
friend and helper." (Odyssey -IX)

Odysseus proceeds by relating his events over the previous ten years. He describes how he and his soldiers traveled to other islands in search of a path home. The Lotus Eaters lived on one of the islands. Odysseus' account of Lotus Eaters is succinct and to the point. Odysseus and his crew settle on an island and eat there. He sent three men to investigate and instructs them to return with additional information. They soon come across a group consisting of individuals who appear to be human. These individuals are friendly and do not harm them. They provide lotus plants to Odysseus' men, who consume them patiently. The men discover that the plants are so tasty that they have no desire to return home and instead choose to stay with the Lotus Eaters indefinitely. Odysseus goes out to find his soldiers and forces them back onboard their ships. He quickly leaves the island before his entire expedition is halted. This is one of the lotus creates a temptation and pleasure by eating.

Much have I suffered, labored long and hard by now
in the waves and wars. Add this to the total—bring the trial on! (T:Odyssey)

The Sirens are mythological creatures who sing enticing melodies that lead sailors astray. On his way home, Odysseus sees the Sirens, and in order to resist their enticing singing, he has his soldiers plug their ears with beeswax. Odysseus, on the other hand, is intrigued by the Sirens' music and wants to hear it without falling to its perils. He instructs his soldiers to bind him to the ship's mast and not let him go, no matter how much he begs. The Lotus-Eaters give the fruit to Odysseus' troops, and those who eat it lose their desire to return home. They grow comfy and complacent, forgetting their past and ignoring their obligations. Odysseus must violently bring his soldiers back to their senses and continue their quest.

The issue of temptation and the repercussions of surrendering to it is explored in this episode. Odysseus' ingenious method allows him to experience the temptation without succumbing to its hazards, demonstrating his cleverness. The Lotus-Eaters appeared to be relatively innocent creatures, with the appearance of typical human beings. Odysseus and his men had subsisted on the sweet, enticing fruits of a tree that produced lotus-like blossoms. They received this name because of their unusual characteristics that which made them forgetful.

Odysseus and his companions then sail through the dark night to the realm of the Cyclops, a brutish and barbaric race of one-eyed giants. They cross to the mainland after eating wild goats trapped on an offshore island. They instantly come across a cave full of sheep and milk and cheese boxes. The men tell Odysseus to take some of the food and hurry away, but he chooses to linger, much to the chagrin of his crew. The cave's occupant soon returns; it is the Cyclops Polyphemus, Poseidon's son. Polyphemus initially appears kind, but quickly turns hostile. He immediately devours two of Odysseus' soldiers and imprisons Odysseus and the remainder in his lair.

Many cities of men he saw and learned their minds,
 many pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea,
 fighting to save his life and bring his comrades home.
 But he could not save them from disaster, hard as he strove—
 the recklessness of their own ways destroyed them all,
 the blind fools, they devoured the cattle of the Sun
 and the Sungod blotted out the day of their return.
 Launch out on his story, Muse, daughter of Zeus,
 start from where you will—sing for our time too. (T:Odyssey)

Odysseus thus puts together and executes a plan of action. The next day, when Polyphemus is outside tending to his sheep, Odysseus retrieves a wooden stick in the cave and hardens it in the fire. Odysseus gets Polyphemus under the influence on wine brought from the ship when he returns. Polyphemus, overjoyed, asks Odysseus his name. Odysseus responds that his name is "Nobody." Odysseus and only a handful of his soldiers shove the red-hot stick into Polyphemus' eye as soon as he collapses from intoxication.

Polyphemus awakens with a yell, and his neighbors approach to see what is wrong, but they leave as soon as he says, "Nobody's killing me!". When morning arrives, Odysseus and his men escape from the cave, undetected by the monster's sheep, by hanging to their bellies as they move out to graze. Odysseus calls to land and exposes his real identity to be safe on board their ships and with Polyphemus' flock on board as well. With his former slaves no longer within his grasp, the blind giant prays to his father, Poseidon, for revenge on Odysseus.

Circe's Feast

When morning comes, Odysseus and his men escape from the cave, undiscovered by the monster's sheep, by hanging to their bellies as they move out to graze. Odysseus calls to land and reveals his true identity in order to be secure on board their ships, as well as with Polyphemus'

flock on board. With his former slaves no longer within his grasp, the blind giant prays to his father, Poseidon, for vengeance on Odysseus.

Mix in the magic work of love—

we'll breed deep trust between us. (T:Odyssey)

Circe, a witch, offers Odysseus usually known as Ulysses in English a cup. There is a potion in the cup. Circe wishes to enchant Ulysses, like she did his crew. Two of Ulysses' crewmen have been converted into pigs; one can be seen beside Circe's feet on the right, while the other can be seen looking out from behind her throne on the left. Ulysses' reflection can be seen in the mirror behind Circe's throne.

It is reminiscent of Circe's mansion and Ulysses' ship. Odysseus, brave and concerned for his men, attempts to save them, but Hermes known as the messenger of the immortals intercepts him and informs him of Circe's plans, urging him to acquire a unique plant that protects him from the effects of Circe's wine. Odysseus was able to avoid the harmful effects of Circe's potion after acquiring the plant. When the sorceress felt her drink had taken effect, she went to touch Odysseus with her wand to finish the transformation process, and Odysseus confronted Circe with his sword, who quickly yielded and returned his crew to human form.

At the same time her handmaids bustled through the halls,

**Four in all who perform the goddess' household tasks.
So she enticed**

and won our battle-hardened spirits over. (T:Odyssey)

*Circe is depicted as a lovely goddess living in her own residence isolated in the midst of a dense wood on her island of Aea in Homer's *Odyssey*, an 8th-century BC sequel to his *Trojan War* epic *Iliad*. Around her house, surprisingly gentle lions and wolves roam. She encourages anybody who lands on the island to her home with her charming singing while weaving on a gigantic loom, but then drugs them so that they transform shape. One of her Homeric epithets is *polypharmakos*, which means "knowing many drugs or charms."*

*Circe invites the crew of the hero Odysseus to a feast of familiar foods, a pottage of cheese and meal sweetened with honey and laced with wine, but also combined with one of her magical potions that turns them into swine. Only Eurylochus, who detects trickery, refuses to enter. He flees to notify Odysseus and the other survivors on the ship. Before Odysseus arrives at Circe's palace, Hermes, the messenger god sent by Athena, the goddess of wisdom, intercepts him and informs how he might overcome Circe and rescue his crew from their enchantment. Odysseus is given *moly* by Hermes to defend him against Circe's enchantment. He also instructs Odysseus to draw his sword and assault her. Circe would then ask Odysseus to bed, as Hermes predicted, but Hermes warns him to be cautious, for the deceitful goddess might still "unman" him unless he makes her vow by the names of the gods to guarantee she will not take any more measures towards him. Odysseus is able to release all of his troops by following this instruction.*

After a year on the island, Circe informs Odysseus that he must first visit the Underworld, something no mortal has ever done before, in order to learn how to placate the gods, return home

safely, and reclaim his country. Circe also advises him on how to accomplish this and provides him with the defensive measures he needs as well as the means to converse with the dead. When he returns, she advises him on two alternative routes home, but warns him that both are dangerous.

Conclusion

Maintain a modest and humble lifestyle. Recall that drugs are addictive and hazardous. People can become animals out of lust. You risk becoming overly at ease and complacent. Despite the worst temptations, be faithful. The temptation was and is still viewed as a sin, an immoral deed, and a bad quality. These cravings include anything from sensuous indulgences to the sating of pride or hunger. Odysseus's warriors succumb to that temptation the moment they lay eyes on the Lotus-eaters. Circe's beauty tempts Odysseus as well, but he manages to save himself just in time. This demonstrates his uniqueness from the other members of his group. Moreover, he resists the want to struggle against the temptation to limit himself when he gets home.

Food is associated with emotions and memories. Food is used by writers to connect characters, elicit memories, or portray emotional states. Meals can be utilized to strengthen connections or to represent crucial points in a story. Food description can be used as a literary device to portray desire and temptation. Certain foods' attraction might serve as a metaphor for larger themes of longing, love, or the pursuit of pleasure. This overall paper represents the pleasure and temptation of food that causes the entire quest collapsed. The temptation of food loses one self control, desire to be in pleasure leaving all the important things behind.

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