

FEMINIST REVISIONIST MYTHOLOGY: A STUDY OF KAVITA KANE'S KARNA'S WIFE THE OUTCAST'S QUEEN

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Abstract: Mythology is considered as the root of Indian culture. We can learn an ideal way of living and the right attitude towards human beings and society with the help of the great epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. They are the milestone in Indian literature that reflect the feelings and emotions of the people. The teaching of these epics are communicated from one generation to another generation. People gain a lots of knowledge from those epics because these epics have a number of stories and characters to whom the readers are able to relate themselves. It will be true to say that literature is a reflection of the society whether it is in the form of epics, novels, Plays, non-fiction, short stories, poetry etc. They all narrate different societal characteristics of the particular time period.

In mythology, we can find some male and female characters have gained a lot of attention and respect. They are considered to be the great examples for the society. Women are basically known for their challenging nature, always ready to sacrifice for the well-being of their family.

But many female characters are not attained an essential place in Indian mythology. Indian mythology writer like Kavita Kane highlights such female characters and their crucial role. Uruvi Karna's wife is also an unfamiliar character who has never been mentioned in mainstream description of the Mahabharata. The aim of this present paper is to explore Uruvi's feminist journey and her active role to support Karna and his family.

Keywords: Mythology, Revisionist, Feminism, Patriarchy.

The epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata have become fundamental part of our life. The two main epics of India which contains stories of god an goddess, adventure, sacrifice, bravery and love. Modern society can learn morals, ethics and values through the life experience of characters of these epics teach us many life lesson. The notable mythological writers who are known for reinterpreting and modernising myths are Amish Tripathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, Kavita Kane, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anand Neelkandan and Ashok Banger.

Kavita Kane is a popular Indian writer, famous in the field of mythology retelling. She was born in Mumbai on 5 August 1966, and grow up in Patna and Delhi. She was an Assistant editor at the Times of India, which she quit to become a full time author. She is postgraduate in English Literature and Mass communication along with, she has past career in journalism, she is a keen observer of human nature and uses that to a great effect in her books. Kavita Kane's novels belong to the feminist revisionist mythology. She has revisioned the mythological epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana from minor female characters perspectives. The genre of mythology- fiction moving ahead a revisionist mythology which was received as a mode of feminist literary criticism. As feminist criticism this area has multiple aims and the main intention is to re-examine traditional narratives with women's interpretation.

The Mahabharata is the perfect epic of the Indian Hindu mythology. The novels of Kavita Kane are exceedingly exciting that the retellings and revisiting of mythology has been significantly highlighted which shows specially the sensibility of women. The novel Karna's wife: The Outcast's Queen deals with mythology of the Mahabharata reinterpreting the feminine revisionist mythology from the Uruvi's point of view. The novel draws the life of Karna from the eyes of Uruvi, his second wife who is the fictional character designed by Kavita Kane. The novel revolves around the character of Uruvi the princess of Pukeya that was ruled by King Vahusha. In her swayamwara she preferred Karna who was not considered as a kshatriya but sutaputra, man of lower caste. She gets married to him in spite of her parents' warning. She became abandoned and disgraced by upper class of other kingdoms as she was considered as the Outcast's queen.

The protagonist Uruvi, performs as a representative of their own conscience for every crucial character of the epic the Mahabharata. She doesn't feel hesitate to ask questions against intolerance whenever she gets chance. It shows her straightforwardness. Kavita Kane depicted her as an extraordinary woman who always listening her inner voice, takes decisions bravely and face the challenges with boldness. Uruvi, the only daughter of King, Vahusha and queen Shubhra

was a beautiful, intelligent, clever girl desired by most of the members of the royal court. The innermost and external beauty has been best described in the novel as,

“An heiress to her father’s legacy, his intelligence, and her mother’s flaming beauty.... Though the burning fire in her eyes, the warmth of her smile, and the passion with which she articulated her thoughts were enticing. She was too spirited to be restrained, too proud to be cautious, and for too forthright to think of the consequences of her actions “(Karna’s Wife -P- 8).

Uruvi has been shown as a woman to have high self- efficiency, self confidence. She was an optimistic girl with great skills, knowledge, capabilities and fortitude. King Vahusha was a great scholar .Uruvi wanted to follow her father in everything. She tries to learn mathematics and astronomy like her father. She became upset when she fails in her efforts to do so . Then she learns music and art . She was an excellent artist of the beauty of nature. Her passion grows for green plants and herbs. She is also love horse riding. She goes to Rishi Bagola’s Gurukul in order to gain knowledge of Ayurveda . Rishi Bagola wonders to find in Uruvi , a rare gift of curing the disease and injured people by her kind approach. Her merciful words , good behaviour and delicate touch works wonders beyond medicine. Uruvi has blessed with a special gift of healing. Her education was in great help during the Kurukshetra war she stayed near battlefield nursing the wounded soldiers. She is a woman with good heart and a feeling of hatred developed within her towards the war . We can identify her rebellious attitude when she asserted with her father about the outcome of war . She asked her father when he indulged in war,

**“ How can you feel so triumphant when
You have hurt and killed so many? How**

Can you gloat about your victory while trampling on other people’s lives ? What is it insatiability, egotism, or self-importance – that goads you to go to war ?“(Karna’s wife-16).

Kavita Kane tries to evoke the conscience of today’s humanity against the nuclear power awaiting to bring destruction not only to the human race but also to the whole planet. We can also see at the present time what are the consequences of war with the help of Israelis and Palestinians conflict. The ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has killed and wounded many people. It has done even graver damage to the human principle at the heart of both Judaism and Islam. Among Jews and Muslims in Israel and Palestine the golden rule has been largely forgotten. The principle that one should not do to others what one would not wish done to oneself had been integral to both faiths. In the Holy land , God’s love has been replaced with murderous indifference.

Uruvi is a strong and bold girl she never hesitates to question the unlawful social Uruvi broke all the notion of patriarchy. She even attacked verbally by asking questions to Guru Dronacharya, it’s a duty of a teacher to give equal knowledge to his pupils but Dronacharya done injustice towards Eklavya and Karna and refused to educate them for being Outcaste .Uruvi asked questions to Guru Dronacharya,

“Is it Dharma of a teacher? How can he be the perfect Guru if he so blatantly partial? If he is not humble and honest, how he can teach his students those virtue”(75).

The important decision that she takes in her life shows her self- confidence. Uruvi ‘s parents wanted her to get married. In order to find out her choice her father went to her chamber. The bonding between Uruvi and father was very strong, her father found her anxious and he asked her whether she was in love with anyone. She filled with amazement about her father’s right presumption. She feels hesitate to expose her feelings to her father as she thinks it may hurt him. She finally opens the secret of her love for Karna , when her father cajoles her. Her father was very much shocked and annoyed to hear the truth, he moderately expressed his objection. He asked her whether she knew the outcome of her decision. King Vahusha asked her to change her mind as it would destroy her whole life. Her father says,

“Do you realize the consequences? He muttered in utter desperation. Not for me , nor your mother, but for yourself. If you marry him , you will marry doom! “(Karna’s wife- 18).

But she continuously said that she would either marry Karna or stay unmarried for ever. Because she loved Karna from the bottom of her heart. As she said,

“ I know I love a man the world hates. I know I am hurting you and that I am asking far too much. But I needed to tell you the truth. Father , I could never marry a person you do not approve of . But it’s also true that I cannot garland just any man at my swaymvara . For me, it is either Karna or no one . If I can’t have him , I would rather stay unmarried.”(Karna’s Wife-18).

She looks so much firm towards her decision. She is a soul – searching person and she never gets impacted by the so cold society. She always listen the voice of her heart. In her Swayamwara she preferred Karna who was not considered as a kshatriya but sutaputra, man of lower cast. She gets married to him in spite of her parents’ warning. She became abandoned and disgraced by upper class of other kingdoms as she was considered as the Outcast’s queen.

Kavita Kane sharply has exposed her view on the caste discrimination through the character of Karna .When Uruvi’s father try to convince her he explain the real background of Karna.Karna was a sutaputra the son of a suta-one who was born of a Brahmin woman and a kshatriya father. Her father told she would only degrade herself by marrying Karna. But

Uruvi doesn't change her mind she remains determine. It shows her strong will power. She said to her father, "You told me to look into the mirror each morning and be proud of myself, to do nothing that I would be ashamed of. I am not ashamed to have fallen in love with Karna. And if it's going to be a mistake, I think I have enough courage in me to tackle the worst moments as and when I come across them one day"(Karna's Wife – 21).

At the end King gave permission to Uruvi to marry Karna .Uruvi 's love for Karna was so much deep, she wanted to be assure that Karna will be received with honor in her swayamwara. She said to her father,

" I cannot have a swayamwara in which my father disapproves of the groom. Unless you say yes, I shall not go ahead. I wouldn't risk a repetition of what happened to Karna at Draupadi 'sswayamwara. He was publically jeered at as a sutaputra, not just by the bride herself but the attending guests as well. If Karna is invited to my swayamwara, can you assure me that he will be received with dignity?"(Karna's Wife – 20).

After becoming the wife of Karna,Urvasi encounters a lot of challenges because she was a kshatriya girl and Karna was sutaputra. . But Urvasi handles all the circumstances with strong heart. Her positive attitude and unconditional love changes the negative atmosphere, she serves everyone with all her heart and soul. Whenever She heard the sound indicating of her husband's chariot her face was lit up with joy. She should always engage him all the time with her intelligent conversation. Karna found himself attracted towards her not only by lust but also the wisdom and righteousness of her thoughts and ideas. He shared all the things with her. He talked to about various topics including politics and his friendship which he had never discussed with Vrushali or anyone of his family members. She did her best to made Karna towards the right path and keep away from the wrong companions Duryodhana and Sakuni. Urvasi is a strong girl mentally and emotionally. She has a great human capacity to prevail over pain a distress. She hesitates to go back to Pukeya , the house of her father after the death of Karna. She decides to remain strong to support her in-laws who are in a great pain and broken state of mind after Karna's death. She feels that it is her duty to support them in this miserable condition. The death of Karna has changed Uruvi Completely and she realized the meaning of self-realization after his death. When Yudhishtira visits her to take her to Hastinapur, she said politely,

" No ! This is my home! This is Karna'shome, This is our home with memories in every corner! This is my sanctuary "(Karna's Wife- 298).

Her love doesn't change even after his death. Uruvi is a divine feminine who has all the great qualities one can learn these qualities and considers her as ones ideal. The character has been portrayed as a beauty with brain, fearless princess who believe in living life on her own terms and conditions. Uruvi is also the woman who paved a way to the self-contradictory feminineness to the modern generation.

Women are basically supposed to be the motivators in family who take care of everyone, lead them in the right way help them to realize their dreams. During the complicated situation of life, woman always supports the entire family. The feminist character of Uruvi as a brave and bold girl has been beautifully portrayed by Kavita Kane. Uruvi performs her role perfectly as a daughter, wife, mother, sister, and daughter- in- law. Uruvi is present as a courageous lady who refuses the traditional rules and questions the patriarchal society. Women have the power to change the society through their positive outlooks, self-realization and strength. Uruvi is a perfect example of how a woman should be in contemporary society, and also teaches the modern women the importance of education, ability of taking right decisions for their life and how to face the challenges in life.

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