A Critical Analysis of Kavita Kane's Karna's Wife: the Outcast's Queen –A Humanistic Approach

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ABSTRACT

Indian Mythology is a foundation of Indian culture. It bestows lot of male and female characters who are considered to be the great examples for the society. Women are commonly known for their multidimensional nature and their sacrifice for the welfare of the family. Many female characters are given less significance in Indian mythology. Indian contemporary mythological writers like Kavita Kane and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni bring out such female characters and their important role to light. This paper analyses the different faces of the character Uruvi, the second wife of Karna from Kavita Kane's Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen. A humanistic approach to the character of Uruvi brings out the noble human capacity within a person to overcome hardship, pain and despair. Thus, this paper attempts to analyse the character of Uruvi and her active role as a pillar of support to Karna and his family.

KEY WORDS: MYTHOLOGY, WOMEN, HUMANISTIC APPROACH, SACRIFICE.

INTRODUCTION

India is known for its culture and tradition. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the two main epics of India which contains stories of gods and goddesses, courage, treachery, adventure, compassion, sacrifice, bravery and love. The enigmatic characters of Indian mythology teach morals, ethics and values to the modern society through their life experience. There are many life lessons can be learnt from each and every characters of these epics. Modern day writers such as Amish Tripathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, Kavita Kane, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Ashwin Sanghi, Anand Neelakandan and Ashok Banger are the notable mythological writers who are known for reinterpreting and modernising myth.

Modernisation in Indian mythology through retelling is a new genre focuses on different perspectives of epics through the eyes of lesser known characters and their significant role in helping great heroes. Undoubtedly, women were played a prominent role in shaping great

heroes and acted as a pillar of support to the legends. But their unconditional love and sacrifices are not being highlighted in Indian mythology. Since the other historical events and male characters are more dominant in the original versions. Women are in general known for their multidimensional nature. As most of the women are kind, loving, and caring, there are many women characters with good qualities and great skills were existed in the ancient times. Unfortunately, such women characters are not given much importance. The modern day mythological writers bring such characters to limelight.

Kavita Kane is one among them. In this paper, Kavita Kane's first notable mythological fiction Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen, the character of Uruvi, Karna's second wife, and her different faces of life is analysed. Kavita Kane is an Indian writer and known for writing mythology fiction. She is popularly known for feminist approach in Indian mythology bringing into attention the much-neglected women characters. All her novels are women-centric and the representations of women characters are unique. Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen is her debut novel and is one of best-selling fiction among her six works. This novel tells the extraordinary story of Karna, the unsung hero of the Mahabharata, through the eyes of his wife Uruvi. It revolves around the character of Uruvi, a Kshatriya princess of Pukeya, gets married to a Sutaputra, low caste Karna, and the consequences that

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follows. The writer has portrayed her as an extraordinary woman who takes decisions boldly listening her heart and ready to face the consequences with courage.

The character Uruvi is the princess of Pukeya, the only daughter of King Vahusha and Queen Shubra. The inner and outer beauty of Uruvi has been best described by the author 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 far too forthright to think of the consequences of her actions” (Karna’s Wife 8). This paper analyses the character Uruvi, princess of Pukeya, who is an optimistic girl with great skills, knowledge, abilities, and mental strength. She has been portrayed as a woman to have high self-efficacy who has confidence in her own abilities. During her childhood days, she seems to be an inquisitive person who is intellectually curious and eager for knowledge. She likes to inquire about many things and asks questions. This innate nature has driven her to learn many things. Thus, she excels in everything such as mathematics, astronomy, herbal gardening, horse riding, ayurveda and healing.

Kavita Kane has portrayed the character Uruvi as an efficient woman who performs all her roles perfectly. Being a daughter to King Vahusha and Queen Shubra, she never fails to hold her values by making their parents proud. She has always been a moral supporter and motivator to her husband Karna. As a daughter-in-law, she has always given much respect and love to her in-laws Adhiradha and Radha. She always understood the plight of Karna’s first wife Virushali and her children and took care of them with care and maturity. As a mother, she teaches her son Vrishakethu all good qualities and morals. Uruvi is an inspirational woman and a best role model for all women. Through her character, the modern women inherit the good qualities and the importance of self-confidence and responsibility.

Mcleoud, in his article in *Simplypsychology*, states that “the humanistic approach is a perspective that emphasizes looking at the whole person, and the uniqueness of each individual. Humanistic psychology begins with the existential assumptions that people have free will and are motivated to achieve their potential and self-actualize”. The character of Uruvi is a perfect example for this approach. She is unique in her own way. She brings out her full potential by exploring herself in different areas of learning even at the young age. She has good interpersonal skills that help her to connect with people more easily. It directs her to have good rapport with everyone after her marriage with Karna. Her positive approach fetches good name in her new family.

Equipped By Education: Brigham Young, a religious leader, emphasize the importance of education for women quotes “You educate a man; You educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation”. The role of education for women is necessary since it will help

them to become better individual to nurture children and educate them towards right direction. In Karna’s wife, Uruvi, as a princess, had the liberty to learn and allowed to Gurukul to educate herself. While girls of her age are groomed to become dainty princess, Uruvi saddled her horse each morning to ride to the Gurukul where she spent the day immersed in the world of medicinal herbs and other remedies. She tries to be perfect in whatever she is good at, which is music and art. She has blessed with an unusual gift that of healing. It was not sandalwood and herbal paste that worked wonders for sickly skin and aching bones. But it was her cool, soft touch of her hand that worked marvels. During the Kurukshetra war, her education was in great help at the right time as she stayed near scarred battlefields, nursing the torn limbs and bloodied bodies of wounded soldiers. She is a woman with good heart who witnesses the curse of war of seeing the injured and dying solders in the battlefield.

Uruvi raised a question to his father that “How can you feel so triumphant when you have hurt and killed so many” (Karna’s Wife 16). Uruvi is a lovable queen with tender heart and pure soul. She had done her immense contribution of curing many wounded heroes and soldiers with her tender smile and caring touch. During the ancient times, only men are allowed to participate in wars of killing thousands of soldiers, whereas women are allowed only to cure the wounds of warriors with gentle care. Uruvi’s education of medicinal herbs helps in treating thousands of injured and dying heroes. Education for women is strictly prohibited except for princesses in the ancient era. In the recent times, education is common for all. Women excel in every field than men. Women are by nature blessed with an innate desire of creativity, love and sacrifice that will help them to achieve in any field and makes them greater than men. Learning is a process in human’s life. Each and every person life experiences mould them and drive them to attain self-actualization in the path of life. Education is an important aspect that plays a major role to bring out the full potential of oneself. Uruvi serves as a best example of how education helps her to realize her strength and weakness and brought out her potential. As an educated woman, she has grown up as a responsible woman and helps in serving the humanity.

Woman As A Decision Maker: The character Uruvi is a strong and brave girl who never hesitates to question the wrong social norms. She is a confident woman accepts herself for who she is, all her flaws and is happy to embrace her imperfect self. Her self-confidence has evident through the important decisions that she took in life. She is a self-actualized person and never easily gets influenced by the judgemental society. During her Swayamwara, she is expected to marry Kshatriya Arjuna. But to everyone’s shock and amazement, she rejects Arjuna and marries a Sutaputra Karna. While she expresses her love for Karna to her parents, after few arguments they finally grant her daughter’s wish. Because they have a strong faith on their daughter and her decisions as she never fails to justify her decisions.

After marrying to Karna, she faces a lot of humiliation as Kshatriya queen being married to a Sutaputra. But she manages everything easily and faces the consequences with strong heart and gives sarcastic replies with a smiling face. Initially, she finds herself into trouble as her in-laws home is completely different from that of her.

Still, she changes the negative atmosphere with her positive attitude and unconditional love which fetches good name in her new family. Uruvi, even though born as a Kshatriya queen, dedicates herself completely for the welfare of the family without any hesitation. She proves to be good woman who tries to break the barrier of misunderstanding among family members by connecting with them. She serves everyone with all her heart and soul. Uruvi expressed her parents about her future with Karna after marrying him. She said “I am looking forward to my new life. I shall live in the home of the man I love, looking after him and his family. There will be enough strength in me to be his wife and I shall be proud of that” (Karna’s Wife 24). Her words clearly depict the kind of love she has for Karna and his family. She has mentally prepared herself of entering into a new family which she considers her own choice because of the love she has for Karna. Not only through her words but also in reality, she lived as a responsible and lovable woman.

Uruvi always follows truth and develops a righteous thought process. Hence, she always tries to deviate Karna from the wrong companions Duryodhana and Saguni. She has done her best to direct him towards the right direction which Karna fails to understand. She is a strong girl both mentally and emotionally. She has a noble human capacity to overcome pain and despair. After the death of Karna, she hesitated to go back to Pukeya kingdom. She remains strong to support her in-laws family who are in broken state of mind after the loss of their beloved son Karna. She has given them strength and courage and she felt it is her duty of her to support them in the absence of Karna. She became a self-realized person who understood the truth and reality of life.

Self-realization is the truth of who we are, what we are – the realization that we are not the physical body, the physical form that we believe ourselves to be, but the energy within that physical form that gives us life (“Realize the Truth”). Karna’s death has transformed Uruvi completely and revealed her the meaning of self-realization. Hence, she forgives everyone including Kunti, Karna’s real mother, the Pandavas, the Kauravas and whoever is a cause of her husband’s death. As a self-realized person, she becomes more aware and tactful in understanding the situation which is not in her control. She kept her emotions under control and stop reacting to everything instead starts responding to the situation. In every aspect, Uruvi has shown her unique ability to handle toughest situations. She is a perfect woman and acts as a role model for every woman. The life lessons of the character Uruvi are the need of the hour for the modern women.

Woman As A Motivator: The character Uruvi is good wife to the tragic hero Karna who feels lucky to have her in life. She falls in love with him at the first sight during the archery tournament in Hastinapur where Karna was humiliated for being born as a Sutaputra though he is a great archer like Arjuna. But Karna has won the heart of Uruvi. Being a brave girl, she boldly opened up her feeling and love for Karna to her father King Vahusha. She said “what will I gain if I marry a man I don’t love and lose my soul? With Karna, I will gain my life, my soul. I love him. I love him for what he is. I love him for what he will be.... I shall live my life simply. When I am an old woman, I shall look back on a happy, peaceful life which I dared to choose and live the way I wanted to” (Karna’s Wife 24).

Uruvi is a woman who takes decisions listening to her heart than mind. As a princess of Pukeya, she further goes to the extent of breaking societal norms to marry low caste Karna for the unconditional love she has for him. Till end she carries the same love for him even after she knows his flaws. She completely aware of his strength and weaknesses and understands his emptiness in life which is created by the society of facing several humiliation for being born in a low caste clan. The ill-fated man continuously struggles throughout his life to prove his potential as a great archer. Uruvi as a wife motivates him with positivity and struggles to fill his void through her love. She reminds Karna about the wrong companions Duryodhana and Saguni who manipulates Karna by using his weakness. Though she knows all her efforts are vain still she remains hopeful and continuously motivates Karna till end.

Uruvi is the only one who brings hope and light to Karna’s doomed life. She faces the same humiliation from her royal friends for being married to low caste Karna. But she never takes it to heart since she loves her new family unconditionally. When Yudhishtira visits her to take her to Hastinapur, she said more calmly “No! This is my home! This is Karna’s home; This is our home with memories in every corner! This is my sanctuary” (Karna’s Wife 298). Her true love for Karna remains the same even after his death. She remains with his family and done her duty as a daughter-in-law on behalf of Karna. Kavita Kane has portrayed Uruvi as a divine feminine who has all sorts of good qualities which every woman can learn from her and considers as their role model. Uruvi is a woman who focuses on positivity than negativity in every sphere of life. There is a popular saying that behind every successful man there is a woman. Uruvi is such woman who is the backbone of the great warrior Karna and the reason for his happiness in his ill-fated life.

CONCLUSION

Maya Angelou, an American Writer, quotes “one isn’t necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can’t be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest”. She emphasizes all human beings are born with potential. But somewhere down

the line, human beings forget the truth and lose their individuality. Hence people lack courage and strength to face the challenges of life. In particular, women are the real architects who have designed this beautiful society. To be born as a woman is gift of nature who sacrifices their own dreams at times in order to help the family to pursue their dreams in life. When a woman is subjected to lose her individuality, it will not only affect the happiness and peace of her but also the entire family. The ability to motivate others and leads them in the right direction of life is an innate nature for women.

In family, women are the motivators who fuel everyone with positivity, guide them in the right direction, and make them realize their dreams. During the dark hours of life, woman also acts as a pillar of support for the entire family. In *Karna's Wife*, Kavita Kane has very beautifully portrayed the feminist character of Uruvi as a courageous girl who brings out her full potential through her life experiences. She performs her role as a daughter, wife, mother, sister and daughter-in-law more perfectly. Uruvi unlike other women breaks the orthodox rules and questions the patriarchal society. Women have the power to change the society through her positive outlooks. Uruvi is a great example of how a woman should be. She is the woman who always stands by her husband, and has become the cause of his success and happiness. In the novel, Uruvi has been portrayed as an embodiment of love and sacrifice that makes her unique individual. She is courageous and relies highly on her

own strength that given her enough confidence to face all trials and tribulations in the journey of life. Uruvi teaches the modern women the need of education for women, the importance of taking right decisions, how to face the challenges in life and to overcome it, and the innate drive to become a self-actualized person in the journey.

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