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Decision Making And Consequences In Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife : The Outcast's Queen*

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Abstract

Indian Mythology is a great treasure house of knowledge and wisdom. It provides numberless morals, ethics and values by which society is benefitted in multiple ways. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are the two main epics of India. They have been serving Indian society since the time immemorial.

Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife : The Outcast's Queen* provides a new outlook on Mahabharata from the perspective of Uruvi, a fictional princess who decides to marry Karna, a socially marginalized warrior. The present paper attempts to reflect on the theme of decision making and its consequences as depicted through the character of Uruvi, Kunti, Karna, Draupadi, Gandhari, Vrushali and Bhanumati. The study explores how decisions taken by these characters and their consequences not only shape their destinies but also challenge patriarchal structures and re-shape the role of women within mythological narratives.

Keywords : Mythology, Mahabharata, Decision, Consequence, Social constraints, marriage

Introduction

The *Mahabharata*, one of the greatest epics of ancient India, has long seized the imagination of writers, scholars, and readers alike. It is a treasure house of knowledge and wisdom. It has got numberless morals, ethics and values which nourishes Indian society in multiple ways. It has been serving Indian society since the time immemorial. Its relevance in Indian society can-not be questioned. Modern writers have set a new tradition by reinterpreting and retelling of it. Some notable writers, contributing in this domain are Amish Tripathi, Devdutt Patnaik, Kavita Kane, Chitra Bannerjee, Ashwin Sanghvi, Anand Neelakandan, and Ashok Banker.

Kavita Kane is one such name who has set a new tradition by making these under-rated characters as the protagonists in her novels. Her novel *Karna's wife: The Outcast's Queen* provides a new outlook on Mahabharata from the perspective of Uruvi, a fictional princess who decides to marry Karna, a socially marginalized warrior and suta- putra and un-hesitantly prepares herself to face the consequences of it. The

novel highlights the theme of decision and their far-reaching consequences. It investigates how decisions shape destinies, challenge social taboos, and reflect on human choices. It analyzes the impact of decisions on individuals and society. In Indian mythology fiction the theme of decision and consequence occupies a great place because it investigates the limits of free will and the weight of social expectations. These narratives which deal with the theme of decision and consequence promote reflection on personal agency, societal norms, and the often unpredictable outcomes of human and divine decisions.

Literature Review

Uruvi faces socio-psychological challenges due to her marriage to her marriage to Karna, which defies the rigid caste norms of her society. This decision subjects her to social-discrimination and psychological distress, reflecting the Marxist perspective that social conditions significantly impact individual psyche. (Srinivas & Bakyaraj 2022)

Karna's Wife : The Outcast's Queen addresses the age old problem of caste/class and explores how it affects the characters. India is a diverse country with various religions, cultures, rituals, and traditions but caste/class has been dominant since ancient times. The term "caste" originates from the Spanish and Portuguese word "casta" and is referred to as Jati or Jana in India, which defines one's social status based on their occupation. (Warner, 1994)

Uruvi is very much determined to face the consequences of her decision and firmly sticks to her decision whereas Kunti decides to give up Karna under societal constraints. "Uruvi is the projection of a modern woman who is not scared of social stigma, Kunti is presented as the scapegoat of the social tradition and culture. (Rai, 2018)

Methodology

The primary method employed is a close reading of the text. The study employs a qualitative, textual approach to investigate the decision-making process and their consequences as depicted in Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife*. Through a close textual analysis, this study investigates how the novel portrays the complex interplay between individual desires, societal expectations and the far-reaching consequences of the decisions undertaken by the protagonist and other characters. The study is limited to observation based on Kane's text primarily and does not see these portrayal in connection to other fictional representations of the same mythological characters.

Finding and Discussions

Uruvi is the princess of Pukeya and daughter of king Vahush and queen Shubhra. She falls in love with Karna, a very handsome and brave archer. She is always been a vocal person and reveals to her father that she has decided to get married with Karna but her father thinks that it will bring disgrace to his social status. He says:

Anuloma or the practice of marrying men of a higher caste is legitimate. But you are well aware that the reverse practice of pratiloma, that of marrying a man of lower caste, is prohibited by the shastra. Karna is a sutaputra, the son of a suta, one who is born of a brahmin woman and a kshatriya father (19).

The people of Pukaya have got a new topic for discussion after Uruvi gets married to Karna, a suta-putra.

.....Noble women looked at her inquisitively wherever she went, handmaids glanced at her as she passed by, and royal ladies put their heads together to discuss her behind her back, Most asserted that marriage was a pity other said it was an unpardonable disgrace. (58)

Uruvi also fails to make Karna understand about his friendship with Duryodhana. She gets troubled to know that Karna supports Duryodhana at the time when Draupadi was humiliated in the court. She leaves Karna and goes to her father's house. Thus she has to suffer a lot due to her decision.

All the human beings are affected by the decisions they make because every decision leads to its consequence. Furthermore decisions driven by love, jealousy, duty, friendship, or sacrifice can lead to

personal and collective turmoil. The lives of various characters like Uruvi, Kunti, Karna, Draupadi, Gandhari, Vrushali and Bhanumati etc. in the novel get impacted by decisions driven by these powerful emotions.

The decision of Karna, to remain at the side of Duryadhana has created a lot of difference in the life of Karna himself along with his family members. He loses the warmth of his relationship with Uruvi and also all his sons from Vrushali in the war. He also meets with his death at the end. Karna has all the qualities in his character but his decision to align himself to Duryodhana overlaps all his qualities.

Kunti, the mother of Pandavas, tries to consume a boon given to her by sage Durvasa. The boon makes her invoke any god to bless her with a son. She invokes Surya Dev who blesses her with a son named Karna before her marriage to Pandu. The decision of becoming unmarried mother and giving up Karna influences her whole life.

Draupadi is lost by Pandavs in the game of dice and humiliated by Duryodhana and Dushasana in the crowded court of king Dritrashtra when she is in hardly presentable condition. This humiliation enrages and she makes a decision to take a revenge on Kauravas. Her decision becomes the reason of Kaurav's downfall.

Gandhari, is married to king Dritrashtra, and chooses to live a life like her husband who is blind. She also decides not to see the world and becomes blind to the faults of her husband and her sons too.

Vrushali, is the first wife of Karna. Karna's marriage with Uruvi, his friendship with Duryodhana, his participation in the war from the side of Kauravs and later on losing all her sons in the war crushes her completely. At the end, she decides to burn herself in the pyre of Karna.

Bhanumati, the wife of Duryodhana knows that hatred that Duryodhana carries in her heart for Pandavs will definitely become the reason of his downfall but decides to suffer silently.

Conclusion

This research has examined the pivotal role of decision making and its consequences as a central theme in Kavita Kane's Karna's Wife : The Outcast's Queen. The study emphasizes how personal decisions can have a far-reaching consequences on individuals and those around them. This is exemplified through various characters. It presents a complex narrative that interweaves personal choices, societal norms, and their consequences. It also investigates how decisions can shape not only the life of the individuals but also the people associated with them.

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