

Human Resilience in Great Indian Epic Mahabharata: A Study of Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*

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Abstract – Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata are enriched with philosophical and psychological teachings. These epics teach us to be optimistic and positive in all situations. The great Indian epic Mahabharata suggests importance of human resilience in our lives. The epic is a web of planned accidents and fated coincident, and suggests the way to win; and makes human aware with his capabilities to cope up with the fatal circumstances. It teaches us to recognize our capabilities and capacities, and inspires us to have success over failure. Mahabharata is an ancient Hindu epic providing profound lessons that can be applied at the times of crises in modern times also. The aim of this paper is to discuss the various resilient characters of Mahabharata.

Key Words – Human Resilience, Epic, Disappointment, Failure, Success.

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“Where there is harmony between the mind, heart and resolution, then nothing is impossible.”

– Rigveda

Mahabharata and Ramayana are two most important epics of India. These epics present the foundation required for life. Each and every character of the epic has his/her own unique identity and we can learn a lot from them. These epics teach us to move and carry on in every situation of life and behave in a proper way in order to build a good society. Mahabharata is not mere a narrative of ancient India, describing a duel between cousin brothers of a family for the property, rather the ancient epic profound lessons that can be applied to the modern world as well. The scriptural teachings from Mahabharata give us important lessons of human resilience and its role to have a happy and satisfied life. Lord Krishna is considered as reincarnation of lord Vishnu and is worshiped as most respected Hindu deity. He is blessed with wisdom, outstanding intelligence, impressive communication skills and ability to resolve the crises and does not lose his mind, remains calm even in all difficult situations. He knows how to tackle with trouble and has ability to arrange the things on the path of dharma. P. Mohan Chandran has considered him the best crises manager the world has ever seen, in his article “Lord Krishna: The Master Strategist-3”.

It is not only Krishna who impresses us with his resiliency at the time of adversity; rather we can learn resilience from many diverse characters of the

Mahabharata who teach us to cope up with the problem according to situation and people we have to deal with. When Arjuna, a thoughtful and righteous person with great sense of duty, finds himself unable to target his relatives in the battlefield, the tactful Krishna understands his personality and persuades him to fight in the nature of a discourse called the *Bhagavat Gita*. K. M. Munshi has quoted in the foreword of *Mahabharata* by Kamala Subramaniam:

“The Mahabharata is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas the climax of which is reached in the wondrous *Apocalypse* in the Eleventh Canto. Through such books alone, the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life” (v)

Contemporary writers use to re-write the epic with different perspective. Kavita Kane, a prominent writer of Indian mythology, has narrated the epic with the perspective of a modern woman. She has incorporated a fictional character “Uruvi” in the story as Karna's wife who is intelligent, blessed with great communication skills, wisdom, love, affection, and capability to face all the crises with

patience. She is central character of the story who shows resilience at the time of adversity. Uruvi is representative of modern voice who expresses the women's condition in the society, and also narrates the story of Karna. She tries to make it very clear that Karna, a unsung hero of the epic, does support Duryodhana in his all wrong and immoral activities only to pay back the debts of Duryodhana's friendship. Karna is a cursed man who tolerates insults, and ignorance since his birth to the tragic end. Despite of an ultimate warrior, he is treated as a misfortune prey. Throughout his life, he searches for his identity, but does not loose hopes, and keeps on moving. He never quiets from the situation whether how painful it is. When he comes to know the secret of his birth, he wants to announce this to the world loudly that he is the eldest Pandava, not a low born, but he smarty decides to think whether he joins his brothers, world would see him as a coward who changes his side only due to fear of death. He is not ready to deceive his friendship with Duryodhana even after knowing that his life precious friend is on wrong path and against the dharma. Smitha Jha has mentioned in her essay "The Dark Dancer: A Critique" –

"Born a pandavas, the son of Kunti and the sun-god, Karna, a terrifyingly chivalrous character, should have fought as the eldest of the Pandavas, but, as we all know, he aligns himself with the Kauravas and fights for their sake in the fratricidal war described in Mahabharata" (102-3)

Uruvi delivers lessons to contemporary generation to cope up with the problem with their positive attitude rather than to be weak and feeble. She talks about Kunti's life who is queen mother of Hastinapura and mother of five Pandavas and Karna. She is born as Pritha, adopted by her uncle who does not have his own child and her name is changed into Kunti. The unwed Kunti begets a son from God-Sun by chanting the Mantra blessed by sage Durvasa but she is unable to disclose the secret of Karna's birth due to the fear of social fame and abounds him in a box in the river Ganga. Kunti reveals her pain to get away her new born baby but keeps patience. After marriage, she is forced to share her husband with other woman Madri, second wife of King Pandu but resilient Kunti accepts all this which leads to a happy life. Kunti has bitterness for her biological father king Sura and king Kuntibhoj and blames them for her hard days but shows resiliency to tackle with different critical situations and the people she deals with. She is a strong and intelligent woman who knows how to things done in her way with the power of resiliency.

Kunti is a single mother but has a command on her children. Her words are everything to them and they win the throne of Hastinapura with her wise suggestions. When Uruvi decides to leave Karna for what he does with Draupadi in the court as Uruvi's conscience does not allow her to live with a man who does not have respect for women and abuse them,

Kunti suggests her not to take any decision so aguishly. She says-

"Don't ruin what you have. Your doubts, your suspicions, your somewhat misplaced noble moral fortitude can do you more damage than good. You have been lucky to get your man. Keep him safe with you. Don't stretch your luck too far."(163)

Draupadi should be given prominence despite being married to five husbands. She is a victim of the story who tolerates all the oppression imposed on her. She is blamed for the Kurukshetra war which is a huge destruction. But what she does, demand for justice only to take revenge for her humiliation. Her husband puts her at stake in dice game and losses her. She is treated as an object and property of her husband and humiliated by her own brother-in-law in the royal assembly. Even after that she is expected to be calm like other women who silently suffer and be faithful and devoted to their husbands, no matter how badly they are obsessed and treated. Draupadi laments for the ill-treatment she gets from males but she has enough guts to arrange the things done to protect her virtue and self-respect. It is resilience shown by the Draupadi which makes her a paragon of strong woman of her times. Kavita Kane has shown that Draupadi would marry Karna as she has feelings for him but insults him as it is the demand of circumstances. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has mentioned in her writing Palace of Illusions that Draupadi has sympathy for Karna. She likes Karna and would like to choose him as her life partner if she is not instructed to choose only Arjuna as her husband. She says bitter words to Karna only to save her brother's life as Karna and Dhritdyumana are ready to attack one another. She suppresses her feelings, behaves like a woman other than her originality, performs according to situation and proves herself as a resilient woman.

"Later, some would commend me for being brave enough to put the upstart son of chariot driver in his place. Others would declare me arrogant. Caste-obsessed. They'd say I deserved every punishment I received. Still others would admire me for being true to dharma, whatever that means. But I did it because I couldn't bear to see my brother die" (96)

Vrushali, wife of Karna shows her resilience for her husband. She accepts gladly Uruvi, second wife of Karna, saying that if he is going to be happy, so be it. She welcomes her rival at her home. As a wife, she is one who is most affected by second marriage of Karna but accepts the situation so calmly. Vrushali does not like Uruvi as she has disturbed her happy married life but she does not express her grief and performs her all duties as earlier. She is a woman of emotion who behaves normally whenever she meets Uruvi and does not allow the circumstances to create distances

between Karna and her. Karna considers Vrushali as the gentlest person ever.

Conclusion- Various characters of the great Indian epic Mahabharata, teach us to bounce back from difficult experiences and manage our emotions at the critical times. A human being must be aware of his strength, assets and problem solving ability. Resilience is not a trait that an individual either have or haven't. We can see and understand through different characters that emotional sufferings and distress are common at the times of adversity. But a resilient person learns and adopts positive attributes from their experiences and relationship.

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