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War, Violence, and the Burden on Women in Kavita Kane's Mythological Fiction

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Abstract

This research paper, War as the Destructive Force of Human Existence Portrayed in the Select Novels of Kavita Kane exclusively reflects how robust act war is and how it becomes the destructive force of human existence. Indeed, this mirrors the reality and the impacts of war on people. Kavita Kane a famous Indian English novelist has written eight novels related to Indian mythology where the war and violence have been displayed through her characters in mythology.

It takes years and years to create the greatest warrior in the world, yet the passion and thrust of bloodshed left their legacy unheard. In Fisher Queen's Dynasty, Devavrat, the Ganga Putra had gone against his own guru Parashuraam in the war which nullifies the relationship between guru and shishya. In Ahalya's Awakening, Ahalya the young girl had been forced to be away from her own palace due to the upcoming war. By the time she came to know that her brother and her entire nation was in war, she could not breath easily. Simply waiting for the news of their demise or their victory. Putting ourselves in her shoes is the arduous thing to feel. Urmila, the true princess of Mitila, daughter of Janak, and the loveable wife of Lakshman, got departed from her husband who meant for her the world to her. She had been in place of letting her husband to go for war along with his brother Lord Ram. She had been waiting for fourteen years for the return of her husband from the war and exile. In Tara's Truce, Tara, the wife of the warrior king, Vali, who had been in love with her husband unconditionally lost him in the war against his own brother Sugriv. In Lanka's Princes, Mandodari, the beautiful wife of Ravan, lost her husband in the battle, which had forced her to remarry her brother-in-law. She had been completely devastated with that custom of marrying another person right after losing her husband forever, yet she accepted that because of her grandson. In the same way, Kumba Karna's wife,

and Meghnad, the greatest warrior prince left his young wife alone after his demise. In Karna's Wife, Radha, the step mother of Karna, Urvi and Vrushali the most admirers of their husband lost him in the war. They had been left alone in regression and excruciating pain. In addition, Vrushali lost her young children in battle which resulted her to go heartbroken and attempted suicide.

Key words: fortifying, notable, portrayed, significant, impoverished, phenomena, devastated, hierarchy, isolated, inevitable.

Introduction

Mythology across cultures is often associated with war, violence, and cultural taboos, shaping narratives that foreground power, conquest, and suffering. Kavita Kane's *Tara's Truce* is one of her finest novels, portraying the monkey race living in Kishkindha, a landscape rooted in nature and ancient lore. Through this work, readers observe that irrespective of their forms—human, apsara, or animal—women endure unimaginable suffering. Kane further emphasizes the catastrophic consequences of war and violence on human existence. Historically, wars have often been waged with women as symbolic trophies, resulting in destruction that claims not only human lives but also nature, animals, and even virtuous men caught in its wake.

Today, war and violence continue to threaten the survival of the human species. This research paper explores the necessity and impact of war and violence by addressing fundamental questions: Is war a sin or a boon? Does it grant warriors a legacy of pride and honor? Do the women related to warriors truly desire that their husbands or sons step into the battlefield? Are women truly willing to let go of their loved ones in war? Is war indispensable for societal order? Do familial bonds—wives, mothers, children, and other relationships—hold meaning for men who choose war? Can warriors value their soulmates above violence? Finally, is war genuinely a symbol of power and prestige, or merely an inherited cultural myth used to fortify legacy?

War as a Symbol of Power and Prosperity in Mythology

Fisher Queen's Dynasty: Kavita Kane's Fisher Queen's Dynasty is a significant contribution to Indian Writing in English. The novel revolves around Satyavati (born Matsyakanyā), the stepmother of Devavrata—later known as Bhishma, the Ganga Putra. Shantanu, the king of Hastinapur, becomes enamoured of Satyavati, a fisherman's daughter living an impoverished life along the river. Although Shantanu desperately wishes to marry her, her stepfather, Dhasharaj, imposes an unyielding condition: Satyavati's offspring alone must inherit the throne of Hastinapur. Understanding his father's dilemma, Bhishma accepts the condition wholeheartedly and vows lifelong celibacy to secure his father's happiness. This act shatters Shantanu, though he ultimately marries Satyavati and fathers two sons with her before dying heartbroken. When it is time to find husbands for Satyavati's sons, Bhishma abducts Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika, following royal custom. Amba, however, refuses to marry Satyavati's son because she is in love with another man. Rejected by both her lover and her family, she implores Bhishma to marry her. Bound to his vow, Bhishma refuses. Amba, devastated, seeks revenge and appeals to many warriors. None agrees to fight Bhishma except Parashurama, Bhishma's own guru. The ensuing war lasts days, devastating the sacred bond between guru and disciple, until Lord Shiva intervenes to end the conflict. This episode illustrates how war destroys not only

kingdoms but also profound human relationships.

Ahalya's Awakening: In Ahalya's Awakening, Ahalya and her twin brother Divodas are the children of King Mudgal and Queen Nalayani, who lead a prosperous and harmonious kingdom. Ahalya's unparalleled beauty becomes legendary, surpassing even celestial beings. However, war initiated by rival kingdoms disrupts the family, forcing them to separate for survival. Ahalya is sent to Rishi Gautama's ashram for her protection, unaware of the political unrest engulfing her land. Her mother remains confined in the palace, longing for her family's reunion, while her brother and father fight on the battlefield. Although war was considered necessary in ancient times to protect kingdoms, the emotional, psychological, and relational damage it inflicted was overwhelming and often irreversible. Kane's retelling underscores the silent suffering of women whose lives are reshaped by war's consequences.

Sita's Sister: In Sita's Sister, Urmila the wife of Lakshman emerges as an unsung heroine of the Ramayana. While Sita faces tremendous hardships in the forest, she is accompanied by Rama. Urmila, however, endures a far more solitary struggle as her husband leaves her behind for fourteen years. During Sita's Swayamvara, a conflict arises between Parashurama and Lakshman, which Urmila tactfully diffuses. Had Lakshman gone against Parashurama, it would have resulted in catastrophic destruction for both Mithila and Ayodhya. Later, when Sita is abducted by Ravana, war becomes unavoidable. During the conflict, Lakshman is nearly killed, saved only by Hanuman. Had Lakshman died, Urmila would have been the greatest victim of loss. Kane emphasizes that women often bear the emotional and domestic burdens of war, even when they do not physically enter the battlefield.

Tara's Truce: Tara's Truce centers on Tara – the lover, companion, and moral anchor of Vali, the invincible king of Kishkindha. Tara longs for a peaceful life, urging Vali to control his aggression, but Vali becomes consumed with proving his strength and dominance. Despite her advice, he engages repeatedly in battles that stroke his ego rather than serve his kingdom. When a Rakshasa warrior challenges Vali, Tara attempts to prevent him from fighting, but Vali, provoked by insults, proceeds into battle. He defeats his opponent effortlessly. However, another monster soon appears, leading to a prolonged conflict inside a cave. Misinterpreting the situation, Sugriva assumes Vali is dead, triggering a series of tragic misunderstandings. Vali eventually returns but wages a new war against his innocent brother. Ultimately, Rama kills Vali, leaving Tara widowed. Vali's belief that war was a symbol of prestige, masculinity, and power proves fatal, costing him not only his life but also the peace and stability of Kishkindha. Tara's grief reflects the silent suffering of women whose voices are overshadowed by the glorification of war.

Lanka's Princess: Shurpanakha, the princess of the Asura dynasty and sister of the mighty Ravana, spent her entire life yearning for affection and love. Her profound loneliness pushed her toward destructive paths. After her husband was murdered – a crime orchestrated through Ravana's deceit – Shurpanakha resolved to turn against her own family. Believing her husband to be the only emotional anchor in her life, his loss plunged her into grief and isolation.

Seeking solace, she requested permission from her family to leave the palace for a short period. With approval granted, she travelled to the Dandaka Forest to stay with her aunt and cousin. There, she decided that her newborn son, Nakrat Kumar, would one day be the cause of her brother's downfall. She nurtured him with immense devotion, training him in warfare and safeguarding him with the hope that he would one day avenge her suffering. Tragically,

Nakrat Kumar was beheaded by Lakshman. The moment Shurpanakha learned of her son's death—her last hope—she lost her emotional stability.

When she discovered that Lakshman was responsible, she vowed to retaliate against both Rama and Lakshman. Her strategies and manipulation eventually influenced Ravana into abducting Sita, triggering the legendary war between Rama, Lakshman, and the Vanaras on one side and Ravana's vast Asura army on the other. Ultimately, Ravana fell in battle—marking Shurpanakha's revenge as complete.

Karna's Wife: Karna—the sutaputra and the abandoned son of Kunti—was later raised as the adopted son of a charioteer and deeply loved by his foster mother, Radha. Because of this, he came to be known as Radheya. His involvement in the humiliation of Draupadi in the royal court marked a pivotal point in the Mahabharata. When the Kauravas disgracefully attempted to disrobe her in the presence of elders and kings, Karna too participated in insulting her. Draupadi took a solemn vow to avenge this humiliation. The Pandavas were forced into exile for thirteen years, and during this period, tensions escalated. Everyone knew that war would commence upon their return. When the Kurukshetra war began, countless warriors perished—fathers, sons, brothers, and friends. Many were maimed; others were brutally wounded. Ultimately, the Kaurava army was destroyed, signifying the triumph of dharma over adharma. Karna was killed by Arjuna, and Duryodhana by Bhima. Countless innocent children and infants also lost their lives, reflecting the indiscriminate cruelty of war.

War as a Storm: Imprints that Last for Generations

War makes the impossible possible: Bhishma Pitamaha, the mighty son of Ganga, was slain—an event unimaginable in the eyes of the people. He lay upon a bed of arrows for weeks, awaiting the destined time of his death. When Satyavati foresaw the destruction awaiting the

Hastinapur dynasty, she, along with Ambika and Ambalika, chose to renounce the world by drowning themselves—symbolizing the deep despair inflicted by war.

War pits brother against brother: Karna chose loyalty to Duryodhana over blood ties, even though he knew he would face his own brothers on the battlefield. His death shattered his family; his wife, Vrushali, unable to bear the grief of his absence, took her own life. War's devastation thus extended far beyond the battlefield, reaching into the intimate spaces of family.

War derails destinies: In Ahalya's Awakening, Indra assists Divodas on the battlefield and encounters Ahalya—setting in motion a chain of events that ultimately leads to Ahalya being cursed by her husband and turned into stone. Her life becomes a symbol of stoic endurance shaped entirely by the ripple effects of war.

War leaves women widowed and vulnerable.

After Vali's death, Tara is left alone and compelled to marry her brother-in-law, Sugriva, for the sake of societal norms and to secure her son Angad's future. War strips women of choice and autonomy, pushing them into socially mandated roles.

War brings irreparable losses: In the Kurukshetra war, Bhanumati loses her beloved husband Duryodhana and her cherished son. Though they died with honor on the battlefield, she is left to bear the lifelong pain of their absence, her tears symbolizing the emotional toll women endure long after the war concludes.

Even in the modern world, war devastates innocent lives.

Malala Yousafzai, an advocate for girls' education in Pakistan, witnessed extremist violence that destroyed schools, public spaces, and innocent lives. In her autobiography *I Am Malala*, she vividly recounts the terrifying realities of living amidst terrorism and warfare. Though years have passed, the scars of that violence remain embedded in the lives of civilians.

War silences young voices: Anne Frank, a Jewish girl hiding from the Nazis, chronicled the horrors of wartime in her diary. Her eventual death in a concentration camp stands as a haunting reminder of the countless dreams lost to war. Her writings continue to evoke profound pain and empathy across generations.

Men Embrace War Women Bear the Scars

Men often enter the battlefield with courage and honor, but the imprint of their absence leaves their partners heartbroken. The emotional wounds inflicted on wives, mothers, and children endure for generations, planting seeds of grief, anger, and sometimes retaliation. The legacy of war is therefore not carried by warriors alone but by those who survive them.

Conclusion

Throughout mythology, individuals have willingly entered the battlefield to defend their rights, to uphold the honor of their women and families, to protect their land, and to resist domination. War was often perceived as a noble demonstration of bravery and virtue. Yet, despite these justified causes, mythology unmistakably portrays war as a destructive force that threatens the foundations of human existence.

Like a coin with two faces, war too carries dual meanings both constructive and destructive. On one hand, it becomes necessary to confront forces that threaten livelihoods; on the other hand, its aftermath is unimaginably painful. Unnecessary wars and chaos must therefore be avoided. Instead, societies must nurture empathy, compassion, charity, generosity, and rational judgment to cultivate peace in a world that is, by nature, temporary.

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