

# Analysing Kavita Kane's Menaka's Choice through the Lens of Lee's Theory of Colours of Love

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## Abstract

*Menaka is a heavenly apsara who was born from the mind of Brahma. Extremely beautiful and intelligent in her way, Menaka is a celestial dancer who makes love and leaves. She, like other apsaras, cannot owe anything for herself, including her husband and family. When she was assigned the task of diverting the Brahmarishi from his ardent penance, she falls in love with him and longs to form a familial relationship that is not expected of her. She, her story of love, her longing for familial love, and her choice are analyzed through Lee's Theory of Colours of Love.*

**Keywords:** Kavita Kane, Lee's theory of colours, Menaka, Indian Mythology, Familial love, Hindy mythological stories

## Introduction

Kavita Kane was born on August 5, 1966. She is an Indian writer known for her mythological fiction type of writing. She writes novels based on Indian mythology, especially Hindu mythological stories. She gives prominence to women characters in the novel. She gives her women characters a strong foundation and gives voice to the voiceless. Her famous books are *The Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*, *Sita's Sister*, *Menaka's Choice*, *Lanka's Choice*, *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty*, and *Ahalya's Awakening*.

## The Apsara

Menaka is the most beautiful and intelligent of all apsaras in Indralok who was born from the mind of Brahma. Apsaras are assigned to entertain rishis, devas, and gods in Indralok. They dance according to the music of Gandharvas. Sometimes they are given a duty to distract the attention of rishis and asuras who, by their severe penance, pose a severe threat to Gods. There is no eternal love for them. Their law of love is to make it and leave.

Everything was shared in Heaven; you could not possess anything in this land of plenty. You could have everything but own nothing. (Kane 14)

They are not allowed to have a family of their own. There are stories given where apsaras fall in love with mortals. But it is restricted to a specific time where after that they called back to heaven by the king of kings, Indra to Indralok. The life of an apsara who is immortal but longs for mortal life and love is exquisitely portrayed in the novel by the author.

Apsaras-born immortal, deigned, and designed to please and give pleasure, but never to seek it. (Kane 10)

Menaka's life has two phases one is her life in heaven, and the other is on earth. In heaven, she was in love with Vishwvasu, the Gandharva king who is the most handsome of all Gandharvas, even the kind of Indralok, Indra, and the Kama, the deva of love.

Her life on earth began when Menaks was assigned to distract the penance of Vishwamitra, who, by his intense penance, tries to create the universe of his own. Though in the beginning, she worked out her assignment well, she could not stop falling in love with her Kaushik due to his unflinching love.

**Theory of six styles of love**

The theory of six love (colors) styles was developed by John A. Lee in his 1973 book *Colours of Love*. According to the theory, different individuals approach love relationships in different ways. Lee used the following Greek words to describe the six different styles.

1. EROS: Similar to passionate love, attracted to particular physical type.
2. LUDUS: Also called as game-playing love. The lover of this type sees it as a game to play with skill and with several partners simultaneously.
3. STORGE: This type of love is based on solid trust, and it is stable.
4. PRAGMA: It is the combination of Storge and Ludus, “the love that goes shopping for a suitable mate.”
5. MANIA: This type of love is the combination of Eros and Ludus. It is obsessive and jealous
6. AGAPE: It is the combination of Eros and Storge. It is selfless love.

**Table 1 Styles of Love with Examples from the Novel**

Colour Styles of love	Primary Eros	Styles Ludus	of love Storge	secondary Pragma	Styles Mania	of love Agape
Example of incidents in the novel	Menaka and Vishwamitra	Life of Apsaras	Menaka and Vishwvasu	Indra and Menaka	Kaushik and Hemavati	Arundhati and Vashisth

**Primary Love Style**

**EROS**

This type of love is based on love at first sight. Mostly the lover falls for his or her love for a particular physical type. The example of this type can be seen in the relationship between Menaka and Vishwamitra. Vishwamitra challenged gods and rishis to create the universe of his own. Indra, threatened by his challenge, sends Menaka to distract him from his severe penance. Menaka comes to earth to fulfill her duty that is expected of an apsara. Vishwamitra sees her while she was bathing in the waterfalls. Seeing her, Vishwamitra falls in love with her beauty, and he thinks that she is an enchantress.

He swallowed spasmodically, tearing his eyes away to flick upwards. Her wet face glistened through the thick swathe of her long, dark mane curling over her bare shoulders.... She was a vision of exquisite pleasure; her beauty almost painful to behold. He thought he was falling head long, pulled down in a swirl, drowning in her beauty. (Kane 113)

**LUDUS**

Ludus’ type of love style is also known as game-playing love. This type of love is seen in the life of the apsaras. They are water nymphs, created during the churning of the ocean. They are immortal like

other celestial beings. They are assigned tasks to divert or arouse the senses of the targeted audience.

As celestial courtesans, apsaras were known to inspire and arouse the mind to unusual thought and extraordinary creativity, the muse for many a poet, artist, and sculptor. (Kane 11)

They are born to distract, give pleasure, and leave. They are not allowed to have a family. The Kama, the deva of love and his wife Rati, teaches apsaras the art of arousal, which should be played with perfect skills and with several partners simultaneously.

Submerge your personality, take on a new one when dance, and lead the man to the final act, but not before building up that sexual tension first through each move, each gesture...Be sexual- master that sexual escalation! No words, it’s a physical game- raw and fluid! Be sinuous, sensual, sensuous, shameless! (Kane 27)

**STORGE**

This type of love is based on a strong foundation of trust, respect, and friendship. This type of love is seen in the relationship between Menaka and Vishwvasu, the Gandharva king. He is handsome and loved her deeply. They stood by each other in all tough times. It could be seen in the episode where Indra scolds Vishwvasu.

...But then there are those rare occasions that

one becomes favored lover, a friend, a consort... (Kane 18).

## Secondary Love Style

### PRAGMA

The relationship that Indra wants to develop with Menaka has a reason. As the theory goes, he checks the list of attributes that will make him happy and bring certain standards to his position as a king and himself; he certainly wants Menaka by her side. She is a ravishing beautiful and clever out daring other celestial beings, even the wife of Indra. It can be seen in the novel in incidents where Indra thinks of Menaka.

She was sharp, unlike Rambha, Gritachi, or Manorama, the other apsaras who had been brought forth before Menaka...She was also beautiful than them. (Kane 3)

The character of Indra is portrayed as a prideful and egoistic king of Indralok who immediately wants to claim any beautiful marvels he comes across so that everyone will wonder at him and also he can gain even more respect as a king. He looks at Menaka in that perspective. He wants to claim that heavenly marvel, but he knew he could not because everything in heaven is shared and not to possess.

She was born to distract, destroy, and ravish. She was nothing like the other marvels of which had emerged from the sea...Airavat, the elephant and Uchaisvshra, the white horse, both which Indra had claimed immediately. He wished he had claimed her too, but he knew he could not. (Kane 4)

### MANIA

Mania is the combination of eros and ludus style of love. It can be seen between King Kaushik and his Hemavati.

I would rather be the only queen of a humble king than be one of the many queens of a grand ruler. (Kane 23)

Kaushik cannot handle his wife's jealousy. This can be seen in the incident where they both argue.

What are you complaining about now? That I

don't love you because of my other wives? Marriages, you should know by now, my dearest Hema, are essentially political alliances and... (Kane 23)

### AGAPE

This love type can be seen in the relationship between Rishi Vashisth and his wife, Arundhati. Vashisth is a humble rishi. He is one of the Saptarishis. His wife's name is Arundhati, who is known for her chastity, conjugal bliss, and wifely devotion. According to the author Jagadhguru Rambhadracharya, Arundhati is the only wife who is worshipped along with other saptarishis. They loved selflessly and was true to one another.

...I would not be what I am because of my dear Arundhati... (Kane 33)

But would their love last? Be as pure and lofty like Vashisth's and Arundhati's? (Kane 133)

### Scope for Further Research

Kavita Kane is a good feminist read. It can also be studied under mythological fiction, women's marginalization, and many other genres.

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