

The Unknown Feminine Voice of Power from Lanka

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Abstract

The main objectives of this paper is to investigate the role of cultural feminism in the novels. Man and culture are considered different sides of a coin and they embody each other. Literature is a sphere dealing with the analysis of cultural voices across frontiers which engages with languages and artistic traditions. Cultural ethnic discrepancies may be accommodated in social political arrangements. In the present research it is an attempt to study the various aspects of cultural feminism. It is a branch of feminism that emphasises the revaluation and celebration of attributes culturally associated with female, it also deals with feminism which emphasises essential differences in between male and female that are based on genetic differences that are distinctive and superior in women. The present research employs descriptive research to identify characteristics and categories related to the cultural feminism.

Keywords: Gender Difference, Feminism, Culture, Essentialism, Patriarchy.

Objective

This paper is a strives to compare two most important women marginalized characters from the epic Ramayana, this famous epic is traditionally divided into Seven major kandas. Ramayana may have lent the campaign a macho momentum in one's fancy, but the famous epic's core beat with fierce women. The epic sketches the women in a society filled with choice of social, marital, political and spiritual status irrespective of whether she lived in a castle or in forest. Mandodari, who appears in Uttara Kanda and Meenakshi in Aranya Kanda are compared, to make it two novels by two authors have been considered in this Work, Mandodari Queen of Lanka by Manini J. Anandani and the other is Lanka's Princess written by Kavita Kane.

The Indian literary scene owes much of its richness to the influence of Indian culture. The culture plays a prominent role in shaping the narrative and stories that have emerged in the world of Indian literature. The values of Indian culture in Indian English fiction lends a distinct prospective and essence to literary works. India's fascinating history, unique customs and diverse tradition have created writers with a treasure trove of inspiration to draw from. Indian cultural studies designate a cross disciplinary enterprise for analysing the condition that affect the production, reception and cultural significance in all type of practices. A chief idea is to describe the functioning of it in social, economical and political places. The role Indian writing in English is a curious cultural phenomenon. Ethnic culture which includes the rituals, values and their behaviours that are past down from one generation to the other.

It may also be accomplished on the task of the same language springs from distinct nations or cultures among which that language is spoken. The intercultural and transnational province of literature covers with the association between various human ventures such as which elucidate the domain of human venture such as Science, Arts, History, Philosophy and Politics. Literature locates its emphasis on the interdisciplinary analysis of social and cultural production. It is an area in which one who study literature beyond national borderline, time periods, languages, genres, and the other fine arts like music, painting, dance, film, psychology, architecture, sociology and politics.

Kavitha Kane and Manini J. Anandani are Indian Writers in English, their success Best-selling novels led to a series of myth-inspired Tales. They theorize myths out of Ancient Indian narratives. Kavita Kane and Manini J. Anandani's novels are refined in the ocean of Indian mines of myth and ecclesiastical history. Their fictions revolves around the overlooked feminine characters of Ramayana. The characters sketched in their novels are re-created personalities, and their fiction takes a different shape from the real epic. Kane and Manini are unique in portraying feminine characters who are the sideline ones of mythology. The women characters disclosed in their fictions are unassailable yet have never been seen the sunshine in their life, their prime movers are not so much chew over. Kavita Kane and Manini J. Anandani's narrating style speaks for their luminous and enchanting art. They have done a magnificent job with the marginalized characters of the Ramayana. Through Mandodari Queen of Lanka and Lanka's Princess, the authors in their works picturises from the side of the girls Mandodari and Meenakshi.

Mandodari of Mandodari Queen of Lanka was a beautiful girl child rescued by Mayasura ruler of Mayarashtra a renowned architect who designed Lanka the golden city and his wife Hema an apsara and celestial dancer they had two sons, Mayavi and Dundubhi, the couple were penancing to Lord Shiva to bless them with a daughter. They were grateful and happily adopted the rescued child as their daughter and named her Mandodari. As a princess she completed most of her education at the age of twelve, when Mandodari turned fifteen Mayavi began involving her in his venture and her mother had instructed Mai the midwife to teach her all things that a perfect bride to be, should know. Once Dashaan visited Mayasura's place to learn architecture, there he sees pretty Mandodari and falls for her. He asks for her hand in marriage.

In Lanka's Princess Meenu, Lanka's Princess was the daughter of the great sage Vishrava and the Daitya princess Kaikesi. Kaikesi's father king Sumali wished to marry her to the most powerful person and finally she selected Vishrava, a scholar and researcher with the concern of her father and mother Taraka. Vishrava had fallen in love so deeply with her that he left his first wife Ilavida, son Kuber and took her as his second wife. Meenu the fourth child among Ravana, Kumbakarna and Vibhishan. She was named as Meenakshi due to her golden eyes which are as graceful as a fish's and fingernails looks like claws. She was a sore sight in the eyes of their mother who wished to give birth only male heir. Kaikesi's heart sank, she needed sons as rulers of the three world and recover Lanka their lost golden city, her lost domicile. Meenu was a girl who was constantly lambasted for her budge and aspects, her own family members nicknamed her as Surpanakha for the claws like nails. Kaikesi miss understood that Meenu was to stay single due to her ugly looks, but it turned out to be opposite. She soon learned magic and art of seduction from her beloved granny Taraka who loved her more than others.

Mandodari was married off to the mighty Asura king Dashaanan, the one with ten heads elder brother of Meenakshi, Kaikesi placed her crystal necklace around her first-born son Ravana. The reflection of the crystal necklace on his face created an ocular illusion of ten heads. 'People called him Ravana', the king of Lanka. Thus, Mandodari, the daughter of Mayasura was coronated as the 'Queen of Lanka'. Meenakshi as the Lanka's princess grew up with thin and curved structure, fish eyed, adorned with thick long brown hair and a sweet mellifluous tone. Meenu falls in love with Danava prince of the Kalkeya Danava named Vidyjiva. He was the one to declares his love for her who was madly in love with Meenu and wanted to marry her, where Meenu had the same feeling for him but Kumbha's words delayed her to accept his hands immediately. They were caught together by Ravana and Kumbha in her bedchamber, according to her brothers

Vidyjiva is a rouge. She retorted scornfully stating their brothers are busy in their newly married life that have forgotten that they have a sister way past her marriageable age older than their wife. Meenu continued relentlessly stating the fate of Vedavati and Rambha. Mandodari tried her best to convince Dashaanan on behalf of Meenakshi by stating him to lend a chance to explain herself and accept Vidyjiva as her husband. Finally, he forgave them due to the affection he had for Meenakshi and he gave a new name for Vidyjiva as Dushtabuddhi in Lanka for his evil mind who brainwashed his only loveable sister, this action of Meenu enraged Ravana as Danavas and Asuras shared a bond of enmity. After twelve years Meenu gave birth to a son named Sambhukumar.

Dashaanan had more than a hundred other women in antapura and married Dhanyamalini and Nayanadini, he cannot stop marrying with one, whereas he has to do whatever is in the best interest of Lanka. But his love for Mandodari is more than anything else and he wanted her to stand with him. Mandodari gave birth to three children first one was a girl as her husband wished for but born dead as she thought and buried in Mithila without the knowledge of Dashaanan, the second one was a boy named as Meghanath later known as Indrajeet and the third son was Akshayakumara who was the first to live his soul in war between Rama and Ravana. The brain behind the cause of the war was Surpanakha.

Vidyujiva was killed on a battle field as an action of revenge by Ravana. Meenkshi saw in a flash back why Mandodari her sister-in-law combined her in her sad speech about her husband's lust. After Vidyjiva's cremation, Meenakshi left Lanka with a great displeasure and settle herself in Dandak forest with her only son, five-years-old Sambhukumar expecting him to grow up fast to avenge his uncle Ravana. Before she left Lanka, she vowed herself as Surpanakha that the cherished Ashok garden of her ambitious brother Ravan's will be reduced to ashes one day. Sambhukumar was eighteen-year-old who was a master of all the celestial and occult weaponry, but to her sad fate she lost her son whom she trained to kill her own blood brother Ravan was accidentally murdered by Lakshman. When Surpanakha hears that the prince of Ayodhya, Ram, Lakshman and Sita are in exile in the forest Dandak, she was like the angry waves in Lanka and needed to muddle a war, which will destroy the golden city Lanka. Her plan was very simple and she decided to befriend with the Ayodhya princes. She disguised herself as a pretty lady with the magical trick learned from her grandmother Taraka approached the young brothers but Rama kindly rejected her, stating her that he a 'Yega Pathini Viratha'. Surpanakha then gears up her steps towards Lakshmana, he too neglected her.

Surpanakha got infuriated by their play of tossing her between them and started attacking beautiful Sita, Lakshman fight back her, while rescuing Sita Surpanakha's nose was cut off by Lakshman. Then Surpanakha with the wound forcing her feet to flee to Lanka with her awful face. The first idea in her mind was to use the young Ayodhya princes against her brother. Surpanakha the game changer unveiled her face to Ravan stating that this shame was while she attempted to abduct Sita for him, the angry affectionate brother could not bear any more immediately he decided to pay in return. Ravana kidnapped Sita, thus triggered the war. Rama's confrontation with Ravana, the epic's second major turn, was the brainchild of the warrior princess Surpanakha, she who asked Ravana to abduct Sita as revenge for her insult. Mandodari tried warning her husband, knowing that he was heading onto a path of his own destruction for the sake of his only sister Surpanakha. Mandodari was not only shown just as a perfect wife, but a wife who questions and advises the most powerful emperor of the three worlds. She recognises Sita as their daughter, she gave up at Mithila by the birthmark resembles as same as in her hand. Mandodari stood next to her husband during the battle and finally sent him with her wishes to win the battle, as a dutiful and loving wife, even though she knew of what was awaited her fate.

Mandodari stood along her powerful husband, she never shies away from giving sane counsel to her beloved husband. Even though she constantly urged Dashaanan to return Sita to Rama with honour, when the war comes upon their Golden City, she doesn't abandon Dashaanan as his younger blood brother Vibhishana. Ravan is dead, Surpanakha killed Ravan his own sister routed for this war to have him killed on the battlefield in the hands of Rama. As a revenge for killing her husband Vidyujiva. According to her, she has given him

a more dignified death. Mandodari, the high-minded queen of Lanka like an ordinary wife bewailing her husband's death.

Mandodari and Surpanakha's role in Ramayana, through fleeting, is outstanding, both of them were an epitome of chastity and purity in loving their husband. Poor thing that who lose their husband and children, they were punished for no fault of them. Even after they hide all their feeling in their heart as they live a life of duality with varied experiences. When Surpanakha's pierced words hurt Mandodari by saying that she has no intention to stay there even for Vibhishan's Coronation or to the second wedding of Mandodari with Vibhishan swiftly followed after mourning. Where Mandodari without losing her temper replied tenderly that she is getting married not for her sake but to protect the rights for Indrajit's four-year-old son, her marriage with Vibhishana was political necessity as Dashaanan's many wives on whom Mandodari cast-off with envy once, as her beloved husband claimed to be political necessities.

Women in the epic Ramayana are driven away by high-purpose. They were restricted to articulate. Kavita and Manini not only present their characters as a pretty woman, but also as a catastrophic character. Their novels are women-centric, about relatively lesser-spoken women in mythology and depict issues and problems of women relevant even in today's world. It is essential that the books talk about all the women characters in Ramayana but Mandodari and Surpanakha comes out as the most influential person, who are self-willed yet calm in plotting their progress. Instead of lamenting, they reciprocated by being a source of robustness for their own. If there had been no Mandodari and Surpanakha there would have been no epic Ramayana. There is much that we know about Mandodari and Surpanakha, and more that was not known.

Conclusion

The comparative study of Mandodari Queen of Lanka by Manini J. Anandani and Lanka's Princess by Kavita Kane reveals the profound strength, intellect, and resilience of two marginalized yet powerful women from the epic Ramayana, Mandodari and Meenakshi. Both characters, though often overshadowed in traditional retellings, embody distinct dimensions of feminine power within a patriarchal framework. Mandodari represents wisdom, patience, and moral steadfastness, while Meenakshi acts as Surpanakha signifies rebellion, desire, and vengeance — both voices echoing the suppressed emotions and struggles of women across ages. Through cultural feminism, these authors reconstruct the mythic narratives, offering a new lens that celebrates female agency and individuality. Their portrayals not only challenge gender stereotypes ingrained in mythology but also emphasize the continuing relevance of these ancient figures in contemporary discussions on identity, empowerment, and gender politics. Ultimately, the novels reaffirm that the essence of the great epic Ramayana would remain incomplete without the feminine spirit that both sustains and transforms it.

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