

**SUBJUGATION AND MARGINALIZATION IN KARNA'S WIFE: THE  
OUTCAST'S QUEEN****B. PADMAVATHY, P. PREMALATHA, P. VEDAMUTHAN**

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**Abstract:**

The article "Subjugation and Marginalization in Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen" exposes how woman are doubly marginalized by her gender and caste. Uruvi neglected character, gains proper attention in the novel Karna's Wife. Uruvi as defiant character who raise her voice against the dominating patriarchal discourse. In Karna's Wife, there occurs a re-view of unfairness and subordination in relation to gender and caste done by the upper class Pandavas along with the great male icons to Uruvi and others. Kane exposes the curelites done by Pandavas to the female figures like Uruvi, Kunti and Vrushali.

Keywords: re-vision, patriarchy, discourse, subordination.

Karna's Wife is a doubly marginalized voice in terms of caste and gender because it is both a woman's perspective and the perspective of a pariah's Wife. She is a robust and self-reliant princess of the Kshatriya caste who loves Karna, a charioteer's son. Uruvi marries Karna, defying every patriarchal stereotype, despite their enormous social divide. Kane gives it a contemporary setting by setting the epic in the present day and retelling it through Uruvi's eyes. Uruvi is a decisive decision-maker who firmly supports her man. She gives a feminist perspective to the lives of a woman interested in the world of men, a warrior's Wife who wonders about war, and a woman who struggles to live and protect her family. She may be a fictional character, but her story is significant because it gives us a woman's perspective on the bloody conflict, which hangs over every scene like a specter of death. Uruvi's story parallels Draupadi's Great War in that it follows her development from a girl to a woman to live with a husband who has given his everything to Duryodhana while allowing her to live

according to her convictions. Uruvi's life and story express her capacity for free will, including her ability to make decisions and the freedom to carry those decisions out. As the main character and a woman, she tells the story from her perspective and, uses feminism. She challenges patriarchy, asserts her voice, and raises issues not addressed in the main story, such as Karna's origin story, Kunti's silence, Karna's attempt to disgrace Draupadi, Bheeshma's silence, and even Krishna's part in Karna's demise.

All marginalized groups are oppressed by the patriarchal system, not just women. In this sense, Uruvi's journey stands for the spirit of resistance. It is clear from the beginning that Uruvi is deeply loved, well-cared for, and spoiled by her parents. She is the only child of Pukeya's king Vahusha and queen, Shubra. She is intelligent, vivacious, and articulate and an heir to both her mother's and father's striking beauty. (Kane:2013:8). While her mother works hard to restrain her, Uruvi's father lets her grow up and defies all social conventions. She climbs trees and rides horses in a completely unrestricted way. She becomes a skilled equestrian as she matures. She is introduced to the fascinating world of Ayurveda and healing through Rishi Bagola's school (gurukul). While other girls her age were being trained to become delicate princesses, Uruvi mounts her horse every morning and rides to the gurukul, where she spent the day immersed in the world of healing herbs and other remedies. (Kane; 2013;15) A Kshatriya princess' options in the world of healing are extremely limited or virtually nonexistent. King Vahusha discovers his daughter caring for the wounded and the dying in tents close to battle zones while also tending to the bloodied bodies of fallen soldiers. She is compassionate, abhors war and warlords, and her father was sure that she probably occasionally Kshatriya. How can you feel ecstatic when you killed and injured so many people? How can you brag about winning while trampling on others' lives? What motivates you to wage war-your insatiability, egotism, or sense of importance? The father always knew that his daughter had won the debate thanks to her sharp intellect because it was

one of the few topics they argued vehemently about. (Kane 16) A dominant mode of resistance used by Uruvi, which operates as the antithesis of warfare, a Kshatriya dharma, can also be seen as healing as a choice. Following Uruvi's selection of Karna as her spouse, patriarchal oppression becomes obvious. Her parents' initial reluctance to change her mind and their subsequent efforts to persuade her are also side effects of patriarchy, which was accompanied by a strict caste system. The term "Brahminical patriarchy" is used by Uma Chakravathy to highlight the rigid caste system's control over women's sexuality in her essay, *Conceptualising Brahminical Patriarchy in Early India*. Marriages happen between members of the same caste to control the sexuality of women. Women are carefully guided because the lower caste male who threatens the purity of the upper caste has been institutionally barred from having sexual access to higher caste women. (Chakravathy 579) The patriarchal control that Uruvi chose to marry Karna and her life afterward are manifestations of that control, which Uruvi specifically resists through her marriage. According to Kevin McGrath in *Stir: Women in Epic Mahabharata*, Uruvi's union with Karna—a member of much lower varna—was an example of a papilloma marriage, in which a woman from a higher varna marries a person from a lower varna. In the story's first scene, Karna, the son of a charioteer, challenges Arjuna in an archery match while Karna is made fun of for his low birth. Karna's beauty, dignity, and grace win Uruvi over, and she develops a romantic attachment to him. Despite all the disadvantages, she is unwavering in her resolve to wed Karna. Although they try, her parents are unable to persuade her, "Father, you taught me to respect and love the brave and good, and I want to wed one of these men... I'm asking for your blessing, approval, and respect for Karna as you would any other decent person. The only reason Uruvi wants her father's approval is pure love for him; it is not the approval of a patriarch. If her father does not give his blessing and approval, she clarifies that she will not get married. This stance taken by Uruvi is a clear expression of her desire, as an Indian woman, to make choices that

will advance her happiness and well-being without causing conflict with the important people in her immediate family. Unlike the West, where the emphasis is on an individualistic mode of liberty, India is characterized by a strong sense of family ties. Uruvi is a prime example of an Indo-centric feminist who fights for her right to make her own decisions without overthrowing or confronting a system. When queen Shubhra questions the societal notions of "honour," King Vahusha tells her to think like a mother, not as a monarch, asking, "Is it easier to live an honourable life by murdering your daughter's happiness in the name of "honour" and family pride?" (Kane;2013;23) This significant issue raises similar contemporary concerns about ideas of family pride and honour that involve the loss of many lives. With her decisions, firmness, and capacity for love, whether for her father or Karna, Kane's Uruvi blatantly distinguishes herself from other women. She ensures Karna receives the respect he deserves by being invited to her swayamvara, a swayamvara in the truest sense of the word, because she uses the occasion to express her independent choice of Karna as the bride. Given that Sita and Draupadi were essentially trophies that could only be won by one man who won the chosen contest, she is exercising a significant amount of freedom. With her candour and outspokenness, Uruvi can win over her parents' complete support in choosing her husband. When she confesses her love for Karna to her mother, father, and Kunti before her swayamvara, she does so openly and without embarrassment or guilt. "I'm not ashamed of falling in love with Karna.... I love him. I want him. I'll do anything to have him and I'll make him care for me! I'd even die for him...(kane;2013,28-29).

She showers Karna with praise, and chaos ensues. The drawn swords are only pushed back into their sheaths following Krishna's intervention, during which he asserts that everyone must respect Uruvi's decision. The disarray and shock surrounding Uruvi's decision to choose Karna as her husband illustrates the oppressive patriarchal system that

discriminates against not only women but all other marginalized groups. Her father, King Vahusha, calms the commotion following her selection of Karna by saying, "My daughter's decision is her own, and I, as her father, fully support it." (Kane, 2013;37) Uruvi takes a big step when she decides to marry Karna, and she crosses several predetermined thresholds. She first overcomes a strict caste system by marrying a suta, far below her social status, in a pratilomatype of marriage. It is the Kshatriya princess breaking every social taboo. Second, she picks Karna, who had previously been made fun of by everyone during the swayamwara of Draupadi. Karna is shunned and excluded due to his outcast social status and affiliation with Shakuni, Duryodhana, and Dushasana. He and the other three make up the dushtachathushtayam or evil quartet. Everybody despises Karna. Thirdly, she defies convention by voluntarily becoming Karna's second Wife and deciding to reside with him and his family in his palace in Anga, defying stereotypes within the institution of marriage. According to MalashriLal's Law of the Threshold, Uruvi, through her disobedient actions, crosses and goes beyond several thresholds that define her existence as a woman and as a Kshatriya princess, thereby expressing her resistance. She broke his rules, won Karna, and he did not get her, which is her greatest accomplishment. (Kane; 2013;50) Uruvi expresses her resistance in various ways, even in the small confines of domesticity. Oppressive systems spare nobody, and Uruvi is brought into them by her union with the outcast Karna. However, a cruel world that treats Uruvi like a pariah and does not spare her waits outside the palace of Anga, outside her haven. Including Gandhari, Devyani (Yudhisthira's Wife), her aunt Queen Vibhavari, and her friends Princesses Ruta, Usha, and Gouri; all the women she had previously known started to ignore her. She never truly resembled any of those women because she was more interested in literature, art, and medicine than in idle rumors. It was never in Uruvi's character to be arrogant toward others. However, Uruvi was struck by the small-mindedness of the royal ladies, who had no intellectual interests, were conceited about

their wealth and status, had mediocre thoughts, and read nothing worthwhile. They only talked about themselves and their latest piece of jewelry while engaging in petty rivalries and jealousies. Knowing that her intelligence was far superior to theirs, she dismissed them in her mind. When she smiled, she declared herself the winner. (Kane; 2013;61) Uruvi is comforted by Queen Shubra when everyone ignores her, and King Vihusha is also moved by how bravely his beloved daughter handled these circumstances. He asserts with pride and justification, "Any other person would have locked herself in her home to hide from this purposefully cold treatment and disparaging remarks. Nevertheless, not my Uruvi; she is a lioness! (Kane 100) This statement captures Uruvi's courage, strength, and respect for her decisions while taking full responsibility for her life. Through her marriage to Karna, Uruvi also had to fight for acceptance from those important to her, including Bhishma and Gandhari. Karna was no longer the only one fighting for acceptance. Uruvi understands that the threat of his demise remains over her life with Karna. With her marriage, Uruvi plays a very affirming role in society while remaining vigilant about Karna's shortcomings. She is the conscience's constant critic, challenging Karna, Kunti, Bhishma, and even Krishna. She embodies feminist values from an Indocentric perspective, being fearless, honest, assertive, passionate, compassionate, and free-spirited while also upholding her strong family values and pursuing her own personal quest for identity. In addition to finding her unique path, Uruvi's quest as an individual also entails working to help Karna come to terms with his identity as a warrior. She battles the outside world in order to obtain both. Questions are her primary form of resistance, but actions such as her rebellious marriage to Karna, her breakup with Karna, and her decision to pursue healing as a profession are also crucially important. She makes it a priority to maintain the voice of her conscience, and in doing so, she also takes on the role of Karna's conscience-keeper. She is not afraid to express her unvarnished opinions. She has always had the utmost respect for Dronachrya as a teacher, but that hasn't

stopped her from questioning his blatant favoritism of Arjuna. Karna was not mistreated by Dronacharya because he was a tribal person but rather because he would have posed a threat to Arjuna, his favorite student, as well as the ruthless suppression of Ekalavya's abilities, according to the woman. How can he be the ideal guru if he is so obviously partial? (Kane 75) Without fear or favor, she confronts Duryodhana and vehemently questions his motivations. She is astute enough to recognize and evaluate Duryodhana's relationship with Karna. Do you dispute that Karna is merely a pawn in your plot against the Pandavas? It's not a friendship, as you claim, Duryodhana. (Kane 81) She confronts Karna about his blind gratitude to Duryodhana and his own failure as a friend to correct Duryodhana when he is in error with the same ferocity. Karna's futile sense of loyalty, his misguided sense of judgment, and his doomed naivety are all questioned repeatedly by her with her strong moral voice. She also constantly reminds him that he has never sought power and that absolute power cannot corrupt him. Whenever she witnesses individuals like Dushasana treating him with open disrespect, she tries to instill in Karna a sense of pride and self-respect. She also persuades him to fight for the respect and dignity he is due as a skilled archer and warrior. During the rajasuyayajna conducted by Yudhisthira, Uruvi challenges war and war-mongering as patriarchal and oppressive forces and vehemently questions them. Uruvi raises ethical concerns about a king's responsibilities and the justification for military conquest. To envision a state without war, she promotes prosperity and peace instead of military development. She has strong opinions and expresses how meaningless concepts like heroism, martyrdom, and the "Kshatriya code of life" are. Uruvi believed that all war-mongering could produce only terror. "I have been plagued by worry my entire life, and I have seen my mother suffer from it as well," she said. The end of a war is never good. Every time my father went into battle, I lived in constant worry that he wouldn't come back. and if he had perished... What benefit has war produced besides satisfying those who seek false glory? (Kane 102) To

demonstrate the pointlessness and horror of war, she challenges and destroys traditional ideas of heroism and martyrdom. These are examples of feminine thinking and how a woman's perspective on male notions of heroism and war may differ from male conceptions. Wars, acts of bravery in the line of duty, and martyrdom are patriarchal notions that take place in public, while women suffer the most from oppression in their private spheres. In her book *Caste as a Woman*, Vrinda Nabar notes that female bonding has influenced Indian society for a very long time. The differences between our individualistic view of the West and the West's view of community members as a fundamental obligation define its unique nature. It is a fulfilling experience to sympathize with, comprehend, and stand with other women in their suffering while also gaining strength from doing so. After the horror of watching Draupadi be humiliated in public, Uruvi also develops strong female bonds with other characters, particularly Draupadi. As a woman, Uruvi is indignant about the events and distraught over Draupadi's situation. She questions Karna's silence in the Hastinapur royal hall and confronts him with righteous rage. "Did it make you proud, great warrior, to pull a woman by her hair and haul her through the royal hall...to take her pride away from her...to deride her as a prostitute? Who do you think you are as a man?" (Kane 116) She decides to depart from Karna and return to Pukeya, and by doing so, she maintains her position as his conscience-bearer. She is acting in solidarity as a feminist because of the agony and horror she feels for Draupadi. The encounter with Draupadi brings out the moral fortitude in Uruvi, who chooses to face Arjuna and Draupadi's wrath rather than flee from them. Unable to accept Karna's dishonourable involvement in Draupadi's humiliation, she departs for Pukeya. She defends Draupadi even though Draupadi has a crush on Karna. She can transcend her personal space, empathize with Draupadi as a woman, and transcend her role as a housewife. Her capacity to empathize with oppressed women, including Kunti, Gandhari, Ambika, and Ambalika, gives Uruvi a distinctly feminist side. She is aware of their suffering and recognizes the oppressive



system they have been a part of. To quote her, "gross injustice has been heaped upon these women," Kunti is told. (Kane158) Uruvi exhibits feminist behaviour due to her awareness that women were exploited by a system and had no options. It's crucial to raise some significant issues with Kane's fictitious character Uruvi. It is a double marginalization for Uruvi when she chooses to wed Karna, a suta, who makes her both an outcast and an outcast's Wife. As the Pukeya princess, Uruvi possesses the social power or might to challenge social injustice and the authority of revered figures like Bhishma or Kunti. The fact that she is a Kshatriya princess and grew up surrounded by the Pandavas and Kauravas make her vehement criticism of the patriarch Bhishma acceptable. Because she is Uruvi and not Vrushali, she can express her impotent rage at Kunti's refusal to acknowledge Karna as her son. However, Uruvi never abuses her upper-caste privilege because, at the novel's conclusion, after Karna's passing, she makes the same decision as Karna to stick with her sutra lifestyle and refuses to return to Hastinapur. Her transition to the cutaway of life can be seen as a form of resistance to patriarchy and the varna system. Uruvi makes a statement by choosing to live the life of a sutra, protesting against a system that labels a person's identity based on their birth rather than their meritorious deeds. Her decision to seek healing is also a protest against all battles, all warriors, and, consequently, the Kshatriya way of life that values martyrdom. Most importantly, only Uruvi could question Karna's moral collapse after participating in the vastraharan's humiliation of Draupadi. Her outrage at Karna's despicable actions, her decision to leave him, and her moral support for Draupadi are expressions of her moral courage and integrity on the one hand, as well as of her feminist stance opposing the treatment of Draupadi vehemently as a woman by the men Dushasana and Karna.

Uruvi's support for the wronged Draupadi as a woman, first and foremost, is also very evident in the conversation she has with Bhanumati, Duryodhana's Wife. How just is it to hold Draupadi accountable for every mishap, she asks when Bhanumati accuses her of being

responsible for the upcoming war and violence? Draupadi will precipitate the Kauravas' initial instigation. (Kane; 2013;202) She unquestionably shows her support for another victim of injustice by defending Draupadi. Even without mentioning the war, Uruvi interrupts Bhanumati when she says despairingly that Draupadi lives with five men, saying, "But she's happily married to them! As a wife, she's managed to keep all her husband's happy... Draupadi gives her men motivation, and she keeps them together. (Kane 203). Uruvi's support for Draupadi is solely motivated by a sense of connection to and solidarity with another woman whose cause has been wronged by an oppressive system. The return of Uruvi to Karna introduces the Indocentric dimension of feminist behavior-keeping the family above individual freedom while remaining true to her convictions. She never forgives him and never stops trying to influence him toward the righteous path. Her outspokenness regarding Ekalavya or Karna expresses her desire for an egalitarian society that goes beyond the concrete realities of wars or the personal struggles of both men and women against oppressive systems. Her love of healing outward manifests her inner desire to bring peace and healing to the world. Lakshmi Kannan, who claims that "at its most fundamental level, feminism is all about human rights," represents the type of feminism through Uruvi. Aiming for equality, respect, and dignity for all, Uruvi also represents a concern that transcends gender. For Uruvi, the battlefield where the dead and injured fell-was nothing more than a wasteland, not a place where Karna could seek out honor and the truth. More and more of Uruvi's time was spent treating soldiers who had been maimed or injured in battle. Karna's brother Shona confronts Uruvi about the dishonor of healing the soldiers while Karna engages in one battle after another. She patiently continued healing in the face of opposition and replied to Shona, "There are two sides to a war: triumph and terror. I only see the horror, the suffering, and the devastation caused by war. Moreover, I'm certain that it is not against dharma to care for the sick, the injured, and the disabled. My parents, Karna, and I don't think

so, and they are the people who matter to me the most. (Kane 213) Going to the battlefield and the soldiers' tents is part of Uruvi's resistance. She enters the tents and battlefields, unmistakably public and male spaces, leaving behind the domestic and private spaces. She is actively pursuing her passion for healing as part of her quest to discover who she is and give her life purpose. She fights Kunti and Bhishma on behalf of Karna. She brutally challenges Kunti and asks why she told Karna the truth about his parentage. When Kunti first meets Uruvi after the shocking revelation of Karna's abandonment, she is criticizing Kunti, saying, "He was always your biological son, but was never really yours for you to "lose" him... You went to him to take away his last line of defense... You have effectively broken him from the inside... "To save Arjuna's life, you went there. (Kane,258) Not sparing Bhishma either, she screams, "You are Bhishma... How do you justify saying your oath is dharmic? Righteousness should be superior to friends and family, it should not become weaker due to love and affection. Fairness and morality are required. (Kane, 2013;247) To prevent the war, she tries desperately to provoke and persuade Kunti. She is harsh in her criticism of Kunti for maintaining her cold distance from Karna. More importantly, for lacking the courage to publicly accept Karma as her son to give him the true identity, honor, and dignity to which he had been entitled. It would have striven all of his life. Uruvi tries to persuade Karna not to participate in the war, but it still happens. After the slaughter, warrior after warrior is sacrificed. Uruvi has spent her entire life battling to protect Karna and dreading his passing. Uruvi, on the other hand, takes pride in the fact that Karna lived and died like a great warrior and that, in death, he attained the legitimacy he so desperately desired when she lost him forever. As Uruvi transcends her rage and hatred, she can pardon everyone, including Duryodhana, Arjuna, Krishna, and Kunti. When Krishna and Yudhisthira arrive after the funeral and ask her to go to Hastinapur palace, she refuses, making her decision. She decides to stay back at Anga with Karna's family instead, where she continues to find comfort in

helping others while helping herself heal. When Arjuna offers to train Vrishakethu, Uruvi readily accepts, but she stipulates that even though Arjuna and Krishna could train him, Vrishakethu would never be eligible to rule. She declares that there won't be any more power struggles or bloodshed in her final demand. I do not want even the slightest possibility of war, I want peace. (Kane 303). Although Uruvi hated war, she ironically did so while residing in one of the bloodiest. She was fiercely independent, temperamental, merry, loving, and compassionate. Her search for meaning in life is independent, even though Karna occupies a central place in her life. She has a strong desire to be a part of a world that is just and peaceful. She uses a made-up character to add feminist and feminine expressions against war propaganda. Uruvi is an Indocentric feminist who demonstrates feminism through vehement resistance. Her main forms of resistance include questioning and taking action. She loves Karna very much, but she berates him and leaves when she cannot stand his unethical behaviour. She makes deliberate decisions every single time. She makes wise decisions and upholds them through her development from childhood to womanhood. As she does so, she crosses several thresholds and shatters stereotypes, showcasing the powerful characteristics of feminism. Her decision to return to Pukeya to care for her former parents again represents a reversal of the stereotype that sons should be the ones to take on the responsibility of caring for their parents. She never neglects her family in her pursuit of independence and adheres to Indian feminist behaviour wherein family values do not oppose the right to personal freedom. In order to carve out a space for herself without changing the status quo, Uruvi negotiates her place as a woman within domesticity. She opposes exploitative systems, dismantles the silent authority of patriarchy, and resists oppressive systems. She crosses several other spaces, including those created by her marriage and the rigid caste system. In addition, she chooses to receive medical treatment in the open-air tents on the battlefield rather than in the constrained domestic space of the palace. She breaks down spatial barriers with her choice of healing,

challenges patriarchal ideas of heroism and war, and provides resistance to male rationality. To find her independent self, assert her individuality through her choices, and reject male dominance, Uruvi negotiates her life firmly and clearly. Her journey does not embody protest or dissent that results in confrontations. She rejects the patriarchal world of caste, battles, kings, and heroes by choosing to live in Hastinapur. Instead, she opts to nurture the emotional wounds caused by the war through healing, which is how she resists. She subtly crosses the patriarchal line with her decisions, exercising her freedom to live as she sees fit without violently overturning established systems.

The conventional and passive roles in which women are portrayed without any examples of their bravery and strength are actually one form of oppression that affects them. The myth-inspired archetypal portrayal of women is exploitative because it prevents women from forging their identities. This type of oppression is just as depressing as other injustices and tragedies that women must experience because it destroys the distinctive identities of women and promotes the one fueled by myths. Fighting mythological oppression requires challenging ingrained gender stereotypes and promoting women's unique identities. The archetypes used in feminine discourses must be rethought and recreated, and some of the traditions' legacies must be rejected and challenged. It is now up to Indian feminist writers to speak out and create fresh ideas about womanhood or feminine psychology.

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