

The Panchakanya Generous Holy Woman of Myth

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Abstract: One such group of unique femininity is the Panchakanya of myth. They are a group of iconic women from the Hindu epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. It is considered that nature embodies itself in five forms — Earth, water, fire, wind, and sky. Each Kanya is born of one of these components, and these five elements of nature create the qualities of their characters. It is accepted that only the thought of these ladies Ahalya, Tara, Mandodari, Kunti and Draupadi can dispel sins. Surprisingly, all of them are married and even have relations with other males. They are not-of-born of the five kanyas, none quite measure up to the standard of monogamous chastity, commended so overwhelmingly in our culture. Each has had either an extra-marital relationship or more than one husband. Why should invoking these Panchakanyas be extolled as redemptive and why, indeed, is the intriguing term Kanya applied to them.

Keywords: Glorified, Misinterpretation, Evoked, Feminist, Argumentative.

Introduction

Women hold significant position in Hindu Dharma, such as Mother, Nurturers, Provocateurs of battles, Propagators of wisdom etc. The five noble women frequently mentioned in Sanskrit Pura as are known as the Panchakanya. Whose stories are believed to absolves sins when their names are recited. They are a group of iconic women from the Hindu epic, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Of this group three — Ahalya, Tara, and Mandodari — belong to the Ramayana, the epic composed by Valmiki, the first seer-poet. Draupadi and Kunti are celebrated in Vyas's Mahabharata. The five holy noble women are called Panch Kanya is the one who possessed their virginity and could revitalize it. This power owing to their purity was majorly the result of directing a holy, appropriate, and responsible life in thought, in word and in action thereby the most purified and most genuine of conduct even in the most difficult times. The literal meaning of 'Kanya' means 'girl', 'maiden', or 'Virgin'. Although the five females are all married, sometimes with multiple males, this was the word selected to represent them rather than the word 'nari'(woman) or sati (chaste wife), which was then challenged by intellectuals. In ancient Hindu texts and holy writings, these females are expressed as young girls and not women. They are so purified that even through the fire they could pass unharmed. Such ideal lives have only been portrayed by five women and hence they are recognized for it. Here are the five women (Panch-Kanyas) who evoked such qualities. Even more so is the celebration of each as Kanya, not as nari (woman) or sati (devoted to the husband). Each of them is depicted as extremely beautiful and virtuous. In analysing what is known about them, we are surprised, for these heroines of Ancient myth turn out to be, quite unexpectedly, guides for us in the twenty-five centuries.

As we shall see, the key to the mystery of these five 'Virgin' maidens lies in the type of sexual encounters they have with non-husband, encounters that are neither rape nor adultery but are, in fact, quite unique. Even more so is the celebra-

tion of each as Kanya, not as nari (woman) or sati (devoted to the husband).

1. AHALYA —

In traditional Hinduism, Ahalya is extolled as the first of the Panchakanya. The first woman is Ahalya, who was not born of a human mother. She was born of water. Brahma formed her form all things beautiful, to be the symbol and carrier of beauty. Gautam Rishi's wife She was attractive. When the God Indra was wandering around close to the spot she lived with her husband. Indra at that point saw Ahalya and was mesmerized by her charm. one day in the absence of Gautam Rishi, Indra came to their hermitage in the mask of Goutam Rishi. Ahalya loved her husband a lot. Indra, who was changed in to Goutam Rishi through enchantment, took benefit of his absence and got involved with Ahalya. At the moment, when they were getting close, the actual Goutam Rishi stepped in and after catching his better half in an objectionable situation with someone else. Gautam Rishi was enraged. He cursed Ahalya and transformed her into a stone. Ahalya was strongly devoted to her husband however as Indra betrayed her, she was required to face the terrible punishment for the wrong she never committed. Due to her tolerance and the passion of her ascetic devotion, Ahalya was depicted as shining but hidden from the world like the sun covered by dark clouds. The point, Lord Rama stepped on it; she recovered her human form. Rama came to her side and announced her innocence in this incident. In the end, Gautam returned to her like the water, maintaining a firm heart through hard times, Ahalya is the embodiment of patience. That is why she is regarded as a virgin. Also, Ahalya was a perfectly planned creation by Brahma himself who described Ahalya as

“śreṣṭha śubhalakṣaṇāmcārūṣavāṅgī dṛiṣṭvā rupaguṇānvitām”

— ideal with auspicious features, a lovely being with beauty and virtue.
(Brahma Purāṇa),

2. TARA —

Tara, a heavenly nymph, was born of the wind. According to the Ramayana, Tara is the Queen of kiskhkindha and spouse of the monkey(vanara) king vali. After being widowed, she turns into the wife of Sugriva, Vali's brother. She was an Apsara who rose from the churning of the milky ocean. After Vali is believed dead in a war with a demon, his brother Sugriva becomes monarch and accepts Tara; nonetheless, Vali returns and recaptures Tara and outcast his brother, accusing him of disloyalty. When Sugriva Challenges vali to fight, Tara cleverly Suggests Vali not to accept because of the previous union with Rama. Vali suspected that Tara was supporting Sugriva so he deserted her. He battles with Sugriva and was killed by Sri Rama. His last Words to Sugriva were to pursue what Tara says. She always wanted Good for her husband even after he abandoned her. Tara is a symbol of intellect, diplomacy, and courage, whose counsel went unheeded until it was too late.

3. MANDODARI —

Mandodari also from the Ramayana, Mandodari was the beautiful and pious chief queen of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Mandodari represents wisdom and loyalty in the most difficult of circumstances. Even while married to a demon, she maintained her own piety and righteousness. Mandodari was born from the Sky. Mandodari was gorgeous as well as intellectual. After getting seduced by her beauty, Ravana married her. Mandodari was the daughter of the demon king Māyasura. Hema was the mother of Ravan's wife Mandodari. Being the daughter of Apsara. Due to the boon of Lord Shiva, Mandodari was married to Ravana. Man-

dodari desired a boon from Lord Shiva that her husband be the most learned and influential on earth. Ravan was an extremely intelligent scholar. He was very proud of his power, and devotion to Lord Shankar. Ravan abducted Sita, masking himself as a beggar, while Rama was away to fetch a golden deer to delight her. In the great battle between Lord Ram and Ravan, Lord Ram killed Ravana and released his wife Sita.

After Ravan's death, Lord Rama advised the marriage of Mandodari to Vibhishana. Mandodari declined to accept this proposal. After this, once Lord Ram along with Sita, went to persuade Mandodari. Then Mandodari, a great intellectual, realized that religiously, logically, and virtuous it would not be immoral to marry her brother-in-law Vibhushan. After this, she accepted the marriage proposal. The Ramayana describe Mandodari as beautiful, holy, and moral. She is glorified as one of the panch-kanyas (five girls), the recital of whose name is believed to be Destruction of sins.

4. KUNTI—

Kunti also from the Mahabharata, Kunti was the mother of the eldest three pandava brothers (Yudhishthira, Bhima, and Arjuna) and the biological mother of karna. Kunti represents the complex challenges and sacrifices of motherhood and fate. She is a symbol of great wisdom and inner strength in the face of destiny. Kunti emerged in the invocation for the panch-kanyas almost as often as Sita. kunti, like Sita, also denotes the Earth. Her Childhood name was pritha, which means 'Earth'. Yaduvanshi king Surasena had a daughter named Pritha and a son named Vasudeva. Surasena handed over her to Kuntibhoja, his cousin brother who was childless. Kuntibhoja named this girl Kunti.

In this way, Pritha i.e. kunti stayed away from her real parents. Even as an adolescent, kunti was known for her hospitality to the guests of her royal adopted father. Kunti was the wife of king pandu of Hastinapur. She is often regarded as one of the leading ladies of the Mahabharata. It is said that one day, she pleased the sage Durvasa with her service and was given a boon that could invoke any God to produce a child. Immature and inquisitive, kunti summoned the luminous sun God, Surya, who emerged before her and gifted her with a child named karna. Still unmarried and worrying about bringing shame to her clan, kunti floated the child down the river. A few years later she was married to king pandu of Hastinapur, who was cursed to die when he intimated with his wife. Pandu asked kunti to summon her boon and take children thru the Gods so that his royal clan could continue. Along with karna, kunti had three more sons named Yudhishthir, Arjun, and Bhima. Nakul and Sahadev were the sons of Madri, pandu's second wife. Kunti, aware of her duty as a queen, called the gods again and took Yudhishthir from Dharmaraj, the God of co-wife, Madri, who took Nakul and Sahadev from the twin God of healing, the Ashvinis. After the demise of Pandu, Madri attempted Sati on pandu's funeral pyre, in which she ignited herself to death to join her husband in the hereafter. Kunti was then left isolated with five sons to look after. Kunti returned to Hastinapur with hers and madri's sons, both of whom she loved and valued as if they were her own, for the rest of her life. Kunti is an intellectual mother and woman who is skilful in analyzing situations and making the right decisions. Kunti confronted problems throughout her life. We find her fine intelligence when she motivates her sons for the war. when an epic battle between the Pandavas and Kauravas is near, kunti reveals to karna about being his mother and gets him to vow to her that he will not kill any other pandav, excluding Arjuna. After the war,

in which the Kauravas and karna were destroyed, kunti with the parents of the Kauravas went to the forest and spent the remaining life in devotion. She died in a forest fire. Hence her courageous spirit, her responsible behaviour, and her tolerance in facing all odds can be an inspiration to the current generation.

5. DRAUPADI —

Draupadi from the Mahabharata. Draupadi considered as one of the panchakanyas or Five Virgins, is one of the most important female characters in the epic Mahabharata. Draupadi is the central heroine and the shared wife of the five pandava brother. Draupadi represents honor, resilience, and righteousness. Despite her marriage to multiple men, which was considered unusual, she is revered for her steadfast character and defiance of patriarchal norms. Draupadi emerged out of the 'Fire' of the yagya performed by king Drupad, of panchal. Arjuna won Draupadi's hand by finishing a challenging and skilful archery contest at the Swayamvar. She had won over by Arjuna, but because of some misinterpretation between the five brothers and their mother, she had to wed five Pandavas. She surrendered her desires to maintain the bond powerful between five brothers.

Draupadi was an early feminist because she was the woman with her own opinion and not the one to pursue her husband. Draupadi was smart, and fearless and would often guide her husband in to action. She talks for herself. Pandavas continually depends upon her for decision -making. Krishna saved her dignity when she was insulted at the court of Hastinapur. Draupadi was so dedicated to her husbands that she followed them into punishment and gave up the ease of palaces. Draupadi is enraged by the Pandavas incapability to defend her. She was desperate for vengeance on Kauravas who abused her and her family.

Draupadi was practical and Argumentative. She had her uniqueness. In many ways, she was similar to her husband and often handled Pandavas. She was far ahead of her time. Because of her righteous behavior, courage, and authoritarian nature, she became an iconic in the history of world literature.

Conclusion

Panchakanya as sacred female figures whose names are believed to destroy sins and as embodiments of feminine ideals within Hindu culture. A common area of study connects each Panchakanya to one of the five classical elements of nature- Earth, water, fire, wind, and sky — which represent the qualities of their characters. Research investigates the perplexing designation of these married women as 'kanyas', exploring various interpretations, including the ability to possess and regain purity or the significance of their unwavering moral integrity. The Panchakanya were the women who were ahead of their time. The Panchakanya are all stated to have had unnatural births and were born without the involvement of the matrix of a mother's womb. Kunti, who was the only one with a mother, was handed over for adoption at birth and split from her mother. Each of them experienced the dissatisfaction of love and the suffering of loss. Ahalya was raped, Draupadi had multiple husbands, Tara and Mandodari's husbands did not hear their guidance and were destroyed, departing them to marry their respective younger brother-in-laws.

They were not the perfect ladies described in books, films, and popular legends years later, but they are the embodiment of prominent wives as recorded in ancient texts of India. The Panchakanya were the women who were ahead of their time. The world initiated with Adi Shakti the one genuine pure form of power, and womanhood has developed since. Hindus adore Shakti, and Devi and idolize her

existence. One such group of unique femininity is the Panchakanya of myth. They are a group of iconic women from the Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. It is considered that nature embodies itself in five forms — Earth, water, fire, wind, and sky. Each Kanya is born of one of these components, and these five elements of nature create the qualities of their characters since. Hindus adore Shakti, and Devi and idolize her existence.

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