

Exploration of Tacit Narratives in Kavita Kane's *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty*

Vidhya N.

Assistant Professor of English,

Christopher Arts and Science College, Surangudi,

Research scholar (Part Time), Reg. No. 22122014012002,

A. P. C. Mahalaxmi College for Women, Thoothukudi- 628002.

(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.)

Dr. S. Geetha,

Assistant Professor of English, Sri. K. G. S. Arts College,

Srivaikundam – 628619.

Dr. T. Lilly Golda,

Assistant Professor of English, A. P. C. Mahalaxmi College for Women,

Thoothukudi – 628002.

ABSTRACT

In literary analysis, tacit narratives play a crucial role in helping the readers understand the underlying dynamics of a text and its characters. These narratives can reveal the character's inner assumptions and perspectives, as well as the cultural, social and historical contexts in which the text was written. Exploring these tacit narratives can uncover new insights into the text and its meanings and

develop a more nuanced understanding. It mainly focuses on unconscious prejudices, also known as implicit biases, or negative feelings or attitudes towards certain groups of people. Though it is implicit, these biases are learned by everyday experience and not innately driven. Associating certain qualities of social categories such as ethnicity and gender, these tacit assumptions are built. As a result, implicit assumptions can influence perceptions and interactions with others, often operating without conscious awareness. This can lead to biases that contradict conscious values and beliefs, affecting judgments, decisions, and behaviours in unintended ways. Implicit biases are part of a broader phenomenon of implicit social cognition. The study focuses on the ways in which Kane's narrative has such psychological insights, and philosophical reflections. Through the novel's characters, plot, language, and symbolism, this research identifies and analyses the tacit narratives that work under the surface of the text.

Keywords: Implicit bias, Social cognition, Repetition compulsion.

Every society is built by basing its shape on various cultures and subcultures that it owns. And human necessities and the desire to own or dominate their living space are major drives that can lead to both hegemony as well as counterculture. Literature of today is becoming more inclusive in representing the sub and marginalized lifestyle, heritage and undervalued civilizations. Mainstream aesthetics of ancient times are immersed in extracting the beauty of powerful culture tied with administration and politics. It stems from the belief that it is only worthy talking about something which can change or rule a certain piece of geography. But then democracy stepped in and diluted power to the common people. This is one major counter step involving the dissolution of the monarchy system. As a result, not the expected perspective but the real perspective of common people was brought out through counter and subversive narratives. Kavita Kane's *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* is one such attempt in showing the sidelined. It is the story of queen Satyavati, from the famous Indian epic "Mahabharatha". In this retelling, all the main characters and their

culture that added weight to the plot are reconstructed in a way that makes them more grounded to human level. Because, in original epics, the culture and some characters are so idealised in a way that they are perceived and elevated to a divine level. Humanising them is not a reduction but realism. It is more relatable because it discusses its merits as well as flaws.

This research paper tries to explore the tacit and hidden verbarium that may act as a drive for some of the major decision-making characters of the plot. Here, the protagonist Satyavati is abandoned by her father, a king, who chooses her twin brother to be his heir. She is taken care of by her uncle Dasharaj as his own daughter. She is referred to as Kali because of her dark skin, and as Matsyagandha, as she belongs to the fishermen community. Furthermore, she is stuck with fish odour because of fishing and ferrying people all day. She grows up so beautiful that wherever she goes she is the magnet of attention. A powerful seer Parashar desires Kali to bear his son. Kali agrees on the condition that her wishes be fulfilled. She requests certain boons. She requests that her virginity remains intact after childbirth, that the fish-like odour she carries be eliminated, and that a gentle fragrance of sandalwood and roses emanate from her instead. Then Matsyagandha becomes Yojanagandha. This transformation plays a vital role in showcasing the change that happens in her character too. Satyavati begets a son, Krishna Dwaipayana later referred as Vyasa, and leaves him with his father. She doesn't want to marry the seer, as that idea doesn't align with her ambitions to attain a powerful position in society. After a few years, she is persuaded by Hastinapur's King, Shantanu, to be his lover. But she denies saying that she cannot be in any kind of relationship with him out of wedlock. She says so because she is aware of her birth, the story of how her mother became a victim for being involved in a passionate moment with a king instead of being in a commitment. At the same time, she doesn't leave him without evoking and manipulating his desires so that he would have no other choice other than surrendering to it. After disclosing this encounter to her foster father Dasharaj, he lays a few conditions to King Santhanu that he must de-crown his son Devavrat and let

Satyavati's son become Hastinapur's heir. The king rejects this condition and goes away disheartened. Dasharaj's condition is a shock to Satyavati too, but he makes her see the consequence of marrying an old king. Parallely, Devavrat finds out the reason behind his father's sullenness. After conversing with Dasharaj and Satyavathi, the crowned prince takes an oath that he would disown the throne and remain a bachelor all his life so that the possibility of Satyavati's lineage to flourish the throne is secured tight.

Then the newly wedded king and queen of Hastinapur have two sons, Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. Upon the demise of the king, his elder son, Chitrangada, ascends the throne as the rightful ruler. However, his reign is short-lived, as he meets his end in a fierce battle against a Gandharva. With his untimely death, the responsibility of ruling Hastinapur falls upon his younger brother, Vichitravirya. Given his tender age and lack of experience in governance, Vichitravirya is married to Ambika and Ambalika, the daughters of the King of Kashi. Despite these efforts, tragedy strikes once again when Vichitravirya passes away at an early age without leaving behind an heir to continue the Kuru dynasty.

The absence of a direct successor poses a significant crisis for the royal family, threatening the continuity of the Kuru lineage. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Satyavati, the matriarch of the dynasty and the mother of Vichitravirya, takes it upon herself to ensure the preservation of the royal bloodline. As both a mother and grandmother, she exercises her authority and turns to an ancient practice known as Niyoga. This tradition allows a widow to conceive a child with a noble or wise man, ensuring that the family line does not come to an end.

In her pursuit of a solution, Satyavati seeks the assistance of sage Vyasa, her son from her earlier encounter with the sage Parashara. Vyasa, a revered ascetic and scholar, is entrusted with the task of fathering children with Vichitravirya's widows, Ambika and Ambalika. In adherence to this custom, Ambika gives birth to Dhritarashtra, who later becomes the father of the Kauravas, while Ambalika bore Pandu, who becomes the father of the Pandavas.

Satyavati, initially in her days as Matsyagandha, is suspected of theft just because she belongs to a lesser privileged community. That shows the implicit bias that runs in the minds of the soldiers who are praised for being just. Implicit biases (Greenwald 2013) is a psychological condition where people do certain things based on stereotypical belief system, but they consider themselves as beings who are far beyond such discrimination. Satyavati thus panics about how she would be treated by society. The stereotype threat that she experiences is the only realistic consequence of systemic encounters like this: "If they can suspect me of theft, then they can arrest me, strip me naked and search me...Who will stand up for me? My poor old father will probably not have enough money to come and rescue me. If taken to the city, I will be absolutely alone, like a solitary, lost person in a desert, without friends or kin. They can do what they like with me..." (Kane 9).

These lines bring out her fear and insecurities that question her ultimate safety. At the same time, throughout the play, a kind of duality can be seen in her decision, desire and actions. "She detests the way the nobles and royalty lived their lives" (Kane 10). Here, it can be seen that she hates privileged people and their ways of life at the same time she ultimately, even abandons her son to attain that same powerful position. "I want more. I could have demanded marriage, too, but I don't want to be a rishi's wife and live in an ashram. I was born a princess and I shall be queen some day!" (Kane 28). This shows the cognitive dissonance (Festinger) which is the conflicting belief she is facing. On the one hand she sees the injustice and exclusivity of the upper class and royalties and resents their control over power. On the other hand, she desires that very power, recognizing that becoming a part of the elite class would be the only way to elevate her status.

In this process of attaining and retaining power, she abandons her son and gives up her rights as a mother. But she was once abandoned by her birth father for similar reasons, instead of embracing his daughter, he chose power which was in the form of a male child. Thus, this shows a cycle of abandonment.

By sending Vyasa away, she may have unknowingly mirrored the very abandonment she once suffered. Psychologically, people who experience abandonment may unconsciously repeat the same behaviour in their own relationships and this is termed as repetition compulsion by Sigmund Freud. Though this school of thought is facing a lot of different and alternate views these days, the happening of such typical cycles driven by similar motives cannot be neglected. Satyavati does not hesitate to inflict on others the unfairness she went through once. Satyavati wants a grand wedding, but Santhanu insists on keeping it simple because his subjects are distressed heavily as their union cost their beloved prince Devavrat's right to throne and right to create his own family, "Matsyagandha, please understand. You seem to have forgotten you were like them once!' She gave a tight smile. 'No, I have not,' she said. 'We were used to obeying our king-whatever he said or did. We had to" (Kane 113). After the wedding, she finds herself heavily disturbed by the thought of engaging in marital intimacy with her husband. "No! She couldn't go through with this; not just tonight, but every single day of her life with him henceforth... But she would have to. She was his queen. It was her duty. Her status as a queen would be uncertain till she produced an heir. And for that, she would have to surrender to her king everyday" (Kane 120).

In later part of her life, after the death of her son Vichitravirya, to retain power, Satyavati coerces Ambika and Ambalika to make Vyasa to father their child. In doing so, she subjects them to the same distress that she herself once endured. This typical repetition compulsion may be due to her unresolved trauma. Instead of breaking the cycle, she reinforces it by justifying it as a necessary thing to do for greater good.

Even the marriage of Ambika and Ambalika to her son Vichitravirya happens by force. Satyavati, to get an heir to the throne, makes Bishma abduct the Princess of Kasi from their Swayamvar. This is again a typical repetition of her father's deed. He too, in the want of heir, disregards the girl's rights, and the same

deed is mirrored by Satyavati, who in a desperate want of heir, totally disregards the brides' consent and desires.

Satyavati is a nonconformist. All she does is to defy the cultural and stereotypical or expected roles. She doesn't mind begetting a baby out of wedlock and leaving him with his father. She takes no responsibility for him after his birth and sees the entire episode as an official favour or transaction that she does for Rishi Parashar in return for some boons, and not as a conventional mother-son relationship. But the landscape changes after her marriage to king Santhanu. Satyavati is obliged to follow cultural norms, social demands and stereotypical roles to position herself as a queen and maintain that status quo. At the same time, she is not a woman without emotions. She carries guilt, shame, pride, happiness, loss, anxiety and insecurity, all within, silently experiencing and enduring.

This shift highlights the paradox of power. While she gains authority as a queen, she also becomes a prisoner of the role she takes. In examining *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* through the lens of psychological and socio-cultural theories, it can be observed that the patterns of trauma repetition and internal conflict that illustrate how mythological retellings deconstruct traditional archetypes, offer deep insight into human psychology and social conditioning.

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