Karna: The Unsung warrior

It is true that Hindu mythology has two major epics "The Ramayana and The Mahabharata" which illustrates the modern values of life. These epics have left major impact on the society. The Mahabharata the longest epic is a narrative of the kuruksetra war and describes the fates of the characters who were involved in it. The Mahabharata describes the bravery of young prince, princess, kings and the other characters. We fondly recall Shri Krishna, Bhisma, Arjuna .but we talk the least about Karna (the peeler/cutter).But the role of Karna in Mahabharata is equally important. The question that arises till date is if Karna was a hero or a villain?

Karna, who was originally known as Vasusena, was considered to be one of those warriors who had conquered the entire world, but what made a man so powerful, suffer! so much in his life? Karna is considered as the son of Kunti and Surya deva. As Kunti was blessed with a boon of summoning any god of her choice and further is blessed with a child. Karna was one such son born because of a boon…… the question is how is it logically possible to be born with a boon , in such a case modern science and medicine is a complete hoarse? Well, it's debatable? Isn't it? He was born with armor (kavacha) and a pair of earrings (kundala) which was said to be given by his father Surya deva. Being a virgin before the wedding was very unethical but in Kunti's case curiosity killed the cat. She wanted to test the boon given to her by sage Durvasa and hence invokes lord Surya or the sun god. The god is all happy with her and blesses her with a baby boy…… this where my logic doesn't expect the science of being blessed with the baby because the god was happy with the lady. Being happy? … Means? Doesn't it mean that Kunti pleased him by giving him the utmost pleasure in the world? It's a situation where every woman is being blessed to have a son but Kunti considers the boon to be the curse and hides the reality of her life from the whole world. Her attendants help her to practically make sure that this secret remains a secret. The question that arises is what about the great mother hood the country has been boasting too? Afraid of having a child before marriage Kunti placed him in a basket and set him afloat in the river. How in human this great woman could be? She was not even bothered about the dangers of the water and river; she stands for a murderer than being a great mother or a woman. The child was later found by Adhirata a charioteer of king Dhritarastra .he and his wife

being a barren couple decided to raise the child as their own. Karna being born as a Kshatriya had to spend his entire life under name of suta putra (a son of a lower community).Suta putra was not an identity it was a curse as the great tradition believed in the fact that suta were born from the feet of lord brahma and they are born to be slaves and ill-treated all their life.

This also reflects the biased society we are leaving and the discrepancies it has been propagating for centuries, it's devastating because the constitution of India is still facing the wrath of it till date. A boy who had the capability of learning warfare always had been rejected and humiliated for his right by the upper caste of the society. The question that makes me furious at Kunti is? Why Karna had to suffer for no mistake of his, no child is born with the choice of parents. This incident of karna's birth still depicts the lack of good culture, acceptance, bias inequality, victimization of the characters in this society.

Karna was interested in learning the art of warfare, his interest lead him to Guru Dronacharya who refused to teach him as he was not a Kshatriya .Dejected he decided to learn warfare and advance skills of archery from Parshurama, Drona's own Guru. Parshurama taught only to the Brahmins.to gain knowledge Karna appeared before him as a Brahmin. This again creates a storm in my mind. As the symbolic reference to a teacher is completely shattered. How can a teacher deny a student education based on caste? The wrath of caste and gender had literally killed the life of this super hero. This incident depicts the preference that is given to the higher community in the society which is still carried forward in today's world from Mahabharata .Karna who was capable of learning, had to disguise himself as Brahmin to gain knowledge. Why is maximum preference given to those people who are always higher in class, and the lower class ispite of being capable enough has to suffer dejection, rejection. Why a person's capability never taken into consideration? The right to education is for all people in the society. Even the great warriors like Arjuna, Bheem refused to see karna's capability. Is this Dharma??

Parshurama thought Karna under the delusion that he was a Brahmin, he trained Karna to such a point the he declared Karna to be equal to himself in the art of warfare and archery. In the end of his training it is said that Karna offered his lap to his guru for a nap. While Parshurama was asleep a bee stung Karna's thigh

inspite of the pain and the Sevier bleed, Karna tolerated the pain and didn't move as he did not want to disturb his guru's sleep. When Parshurama woke up from his sleep and saw karna's thigh bleeding, at once he deduced that Karna was not a Brahmin as Brahmin's are considered to have less amount patience and tolerance, raged with anger of being cheated Parshurama cursed Karna saying that he would forget to wield the knowledge of Brahmastra. Upon karna's continues pleading Parshurama relently modified his curse saying that Karna would only lose the knowledge when he needed it the most while fighting with a warrior equal to him. Arjuna is considered to be the only warrior who is capable enough to fight with Karna. Parshurama had trained Karna to such level where he considered Karna as a warrior equal to him. Was Parshurama afraid to fight with his own student? Was it the fear of losing against his own student made Parshurama to curse Karna? Or did he know that one day Karna had to fight his final battle against Arjuna?

This was not the only curse that was given to him it is said that he got two more curses, one from a Brahmin who cursed him for killing his innocent and helpless cow, And another from Bhumidevi.All the three curses lead to Karna's defeat in the kuruksetra war. Karna's life changed after he met Duryodhana whom he considered to be his best friend. Duryodhana not only offered him the kingdom of Anga he also made sure that his friendship would help him to fight with the Pandavas as Karna had mastered the art of Archery he was the only person capable enough to fight with Arjuna as equal. Was Karna a fool or was he clever enough to accept the offer of friendship from Duryodhana. He always knew that Duryodhana was wrong then why didn't he stop Duryodhana? If Duryodhana and Karna were considered to be best of friends then it is a friend's rightful duty to stop another friend from doing wrong then why didn't Karna stop him? Was he too afraid to lose his position as a king? Was it karna's greed that stopped him to question Duryodhana? Karna is always considered to be the only person from the Kauravs who followed Dharma. If so then why did he support Duryodhana wrong doings?

He also knew that Duryodhana had offered him his friendship only to defeat the pandava's.inspite of all this he was willing to lose his identity as a warrior who had struggled all his life to find his true identity the question that rises the most is why does our society always prefer a background that is always high. The human society has many groups of people leaving in it. Why the preference is always given to somebody

who belongs to a high cast. It can also be considered that Duryodhana had brought Karna by offering him the kingdom of Anga.

Karna helped Duryodhana marry the princess Bhanumati of Kalinga. Duryodhana abducted Princess Bhanumati from her Swayamvara ceremony in a chariot and Karna fought with the rest of the suitors. Duryodhana was considered to be one of the great warriors then what was the necessity of Karna to fight for Duryodhana. Karna could have told Duryodhana to win the hands of the princess instead of abducting her. Or was it just a show to prove that he was a warrior who is capable of defeating all the other kings including Jarasand. Jarasandha gifted the city of *Malini* to Karna as a token of appreciation. The victory over Jarasandha made Karna famous.

Upon prodding by his uncle Shakuni and Karna, Duryodhana goes forward with a plot to kill the Pandavas through treachery, apparently succeeding, And Duryodhana plotted many evils plan against Pandavas with Karnas support. Karna always wanted to prove himself as the best, and he himself knew this that his biggest competitors were the pandavas helping Duryodhana could fulfill his needs.But just to fulfill his needs was it right on his part to support adharma? He could always defeat the Pandavas with his courage and strength after all he was considered as man who was capable of defeating the Pandavas on his own. Or did he doubt his own capabilities. ?

After Shakuni won a game of dice by tricking Yudhisther, Draupadi, who was now the wife to all the five Pandavas, was dragged into the court by Dushasana. In the court of Hastinapur a women who was a queen and sister-in-law to Duryodhana and his brothers was forcibly striped. Karna seeing this horrifying act did not stop his friend Duryodhana; instead he supported Duryodhana and insulted Draupadi by saying that a woman with more than one husband is nothing but a whore/prostitute. It's when Arjuna took an oath to kill Karna for insulting sacred women by commenting her as a prostitute. Was it right on karna's part to insult and support Duryodhana to this extent? His revenge was against Arjuna then why target Draupadi? Why are women always targeted to defeat the powerful men? Can karna's words be justified? After this can Karna be considered as a man of honor? A man should always respect women he shouldn't be the reason to disgrace

her? If same thing had come upon Karna's wife wouldn't he punish the wrongdoer? How could he forget that Draupadi was also somebody else's wife? He had all the rights to stop Duryodhana. It was only Vidura who tried to stop the horrifying act.

Later after the Pandavas were in exile, Karna took up the task of establishing Duryodhana as the Emperor of the World. Karna embarks upon a worldwide military campaign, otherwise called Digvijaya Yatra, conquering kings in every direction and subjugating their kingdoms and making them swear allegiance to Duryodhana as the king of Hastinapur. King Dhritarashtra praised Karna, comparing him favorably to those like Bhishma and Drona, who had never returned such tribute. Karna came back to Hastinapur with immense wealth and power. Karna could have stopped after all this, now he was recognized by the whole world as warrior with immense might then why didn't he stop after all he was raised up as a Suta putra. All that he achieved in his life was enough for him to retire or lead a life peacefully. After the completion of the Pandavas exile, they decided to take back everything which belonged to them; they also decided to avenge the insult that came upon Draupadi.

Before the war started. Indra realized that Karna would be invincible in battle and unable to be killed as long as he had his Kavach and Kundal.As the father of Arjuna he approaches Karna as a poor Brahmin during Karna's sun-worship. It is said that Karna couldn't refuse anything asked by anybody after his bath and during his sun worship.Surya dev had already warned Karna of Indra's intentions beforehand, but Karn explained that he was bound by his word and could not send anyone from his door empty-handed. When Indra approached Karna in the form of a Brahmin beggar and asked for his Kavacha and Kundala as alms, Karna at once recognizes the Brahmin's true identity but assured that he would never turn anyone empty handed from his door. Indra became happy and took his normal form. Karna happily Cut his armor and earrings off his body, and handed them to Indra. Indra granted him the boon of Vasavi Shakti, with the condition that Karna could only use the weapon once. In some versions of the story, Indra gives Karna the name "Karna" meaning the cutter/peeler of his own skin/natural armor for this great act. This incident depicts karnas helpful nature and also gives him a respect as a man who is true to his word.But is it possible for somebody to cut his own skin the pain and the blood could have also killed him ,or was it just an

ordinary armour that could be removed easily?the question also arises that indra knew that armour was attached to his body this incident could even killed Karna was all this to save his own sons life how can indra as a father forget that Karna was also somebody else's son .

Krishna then reveals the fact to Karna that he is the eldest son of Kunti, who is technically the eldest Pandavas and that everything that belongs to the Pandavas are rightfully his by birth. He tells him to take the sides of the Pandavas and leave Duryodhana, but Karna being a man true to his words deny's his offer and decides to stay with the kauravas. As the war approached, Kunti met Karna and in a hope to keep her children alive she asked Karna to join the Pandavas. Why did Kunti decide to approach Karna now was the feeling of motherhood gone were she placed him in a basket and afloat him in the water? If she wanted Karna back why didn't she approach him before why only now? Was she afraid that he would kill her other sons? Wasn't Karna also the child of Kunti then why she went to her only to save her other son's it is clear that she did not have much attention towards Karna she preferred her other son's the most . a mother is portrayed as someone who loves all her children equally, then why is there a special corner on Kunti's heart for her other sons and not for Karna? Karna became emotionally weakened. His hatred against the Pandavas weakened, but Karna again rejects Kunti offers. He knew that he had to fight against Arjuna with a motive to kill him, but he promises Kunti that he will not kill the other Pandavas except Arjuna. Karna requested his mother to keep their relationship a secret till the end of the war, as he knew that the Pandavas will not fight against their own brother in the Dharma Yuddha. He also promised that at the end of the war she would still have five sons, the fifth one be either Arjuna or Karna himself.

Bhishma was appointed as the army general of the Kauravas. But he kept Karna away from the war saying that he had humiliated Draupadi and disrespected guru Parshurama. Bhishma further insults Karna and declares him as just an *Ardha Rathi* (Half a Rathi) warrior, (since Karna had a habit of running away when he lost any fight).Is correct for a warrior like Karna to run away from his battle ground whenever he lost his battle. This shows the forwardness of Karna. The first rule of being a warrior is to never run away from the battle grounds. If Karna used to do that then do we consider him as a warrior?

Duryodhana always wanted Karna to fight in the war from the beginning, but Bhishma threatens that he will not fight if Karna is in the army. Bhishma threatens Duryodhana that he will fight as long as Karna is in the army.duryodhana knew that karna's identity as suta putra will develop a fear among the kings who were in the kauravas side. A friend is always supposed to help the another friend then how does Duryodhana consider himself as true friend of Karna if he was a true friend of Karna then he would have fought for him and given him his right position in the army, then why keep his friend away from the war. He was considered as karna's best friend is this what best friends are for? question yourselves who is a best friend the one who helps you and fights for you or somebody who uses you for their own satisfaction ? So Karna decides that he will not fight until the fall of Bhishma. Only after Bhishma falls on the eleventh day Karna enter the war. After the fall of Bhishma, Karna visits him on the bed of arrows and Bhishma reveals the fact that he knew the truth about Karna's birth. He justifies his words to Karna and praises his power and blesses him. This thing proves the biased mentality of Bhishma he loved the Pandavas especially Arjuna the most and he knew that Arjuna's biggest rival was Karna. So it is possible that to help his beloved Arjuna he made this plot.in our society favourism plays very important roles to leave in the society you have to be in the favor of someone who is important and in power.

The story of karna's end starts in the Karna parva of the book, Karna Parva describes the appointment of Karna as the third army general after Dronacharya. Karna entered the battle He defeated four of five Pandavas brothers - Yudhishthira, Bhīma, Nakula and Sahedeva. However, Karna did not kill any of them in order to keep his promise to Kunti. On the second last day of the war, Karna and Arjuna engaged in a mortal fight, in which Karna was slowly gaining upper hand. Karna's chariot sank into earth. Karna stepped out to remove the wheel, asking Arjuna to suspend their battle, as the agreed rules of just war required. However, Krishna told Arjuna that Karna had no right to the rules of a just war because Karna and Duryodhana had consistently violated those rules of justice before the war, including when the game of dice was played and when Draupadi was dragged to the royal court by hair. Karna hung his head in shame but continued the fight on a tilted chariot, even making Arjuna swoon. While Arjuna was unconscious, Karna decided to utilize the time in extracting the wheel of his chariot. Krishna knew that it was the only time possible to kill Karna,

else he was invincible. Arjuna responded with Anjalika Astra, killing Karna. Was it correct on Arjuna's part to kill the helpless, weaponless Karna? Then how do we still consider Arjuna as a warrior who was on the side dharma? Killing a helpless man could not have given Arjuna the title of a brave warrior? Warriors are not supposed to be killing other warriors by the means of adharma then how the Pandavs's be considered to be the ones following the dharma. Karna a warrior born out of a boon and died because of a curse .indeed his entire life was all nothing but was filled with suffering. At the end again there is one question that remains the same was Karna a hero or a villain? Or a man who was under bad influence or somebody who was unlucky enough to be cursed?