

# Demystifying the Archetypal Role of Karna in Related to *Karna- The Great Warrior* by Ranjith Desai

Priya M<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. M. John Suganya<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Department of English

<sup>1\*,2</sup> PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

<sup>1\*</sup> [priyadpi2000@gmail.com](mailto:priyadpi2000@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> [suganyajohn@gmail.com](mailto:suganyajohn@gmail.com) +91 9994924381

## Abstract

This paper represents the archetypal character of Karna related to the novel *Karna-The Great Warrior* by Ranjith Desai. According to the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata* Karna has been portrayed as an antagonist only because he chooses Duryodhana. Karna was a loyal and true comrade to Duryodhana and he fought on his behalf against the Pandavas (his brother) in the famous Kurukshetra war. He fought against misfortune throughout his life and kept his word under all circumstances. Karna is known for his courage and generosity. Deconstruction theory argues the truth and justice. This theory is applied on the protagonist to prove the righteousness of Karna. His character is developed in the epic to raise and discuss major emotional and dharma (duty, ethics, moral) dilemmas. The researcher analyses the character of Karna and try to prove his optimistic side and his truth and valour even when he chooses adharma. Demystifying Karna's Life he faced lot of tragedies, he always tries to stand by the side dharma but he had to take Duryodhana's side because he gave him an identity as a great warrior and ruler.

**Key words:** *Deconstruction, Demystifying, Archetypal, Misfortune, Warrior, Courage and Generosity.*

## Introduction

Ranjith Desai was born on 8 April 1928 and died on 6 March 1992. He was a popular Marathi writer from Maharashtra. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award and Padma Shri. Desai's most prominent creations are Swami and Shriman Yogi.

Radheya- A story narrating the life of Karna, the eldest of all Pandav's. *Karna- The great warrior* speaks only about Karna and his most haunted question "who am I?" This question troubles him all through his life. His whole life seems to be entrapped in the answer. His ambitious, his majesty, his destination -they all seemed connected to entrap. This irony was that the truth, instead of liberating him, had made him rudderless. Karna is the classic tragic hero. In *Mahabharata*, Karna is known to be the only warrior who could match Arjuna. Born of a God and a mother who abandoned and mistreated him at birth. Rejected by Drona, provoke by Draupadi, insulted by his blood relations, misunderstood by many. Desai gives voice to the angst and loneliness of Karna.

### **Karna- Valorous warrior**

Karna was the most tragic, key warrior and spotless character in the epic *Mahabharata*. He was born with his armour (Kavach) and ear-ring (Kundal). He was a handsome, intelligent, powerful, a man of moral values and ethics and he is well known for his great archer. He was born to God sun and an unmarried women named Kunti for which the concluding, she left him in the flowing water and reckless him. He was found and bought up by the foster Sutra parents named Radha and Adhiratha due to which he is named as 'Sutra Putra'. The concept of casteism, entitlement during the ancient times. The Sutra belongs to the lower caste of the society, who lives in the margins, so they are ill-treated by the higher caste or the people from royal family. Many times, he received ignominy in the name of caste. Karna all through his life got nothing but complete indignity and libel. He never got an opportunity are right place to prove himself the best. Karna is very bountiful. His character has been mostly spoken for his charity and his widely known as the greatest 'Daan-Veer' of the universe. He was a great donor and he never kept any riches to himself and donated everything to people and he never said "No" to anyone asking from him anything. Whoever visits Karna they never returned empty hand from his place. This is the tangible when the divine deity Indra loom Karna in the guise of a Brahmin and asked his armour and ear-ring, Karna despite bring aware of the fact that the man who ask his belongings was not a Brahmin but the Indra himself, but he did not equivocate to offer his only possession. He was well known that he was unbeaten as long as he had his armour and ear-ring, but then he voluntarily gave them up without thinking about his life and safety. On seeing this mesmerizingly Indra offered him an

unbeatable weapon named 'Shakti'. Karna is never down to Pandavas in any qualities. He was even stronger than Arjuna as an archer, because Arjuna could not overwhelm him without the aid of Lord Krishna and the deity Indra. This character Karna has touch of tragedy and compassion. Though he struggled a lot against the odd ones, but he remained faithful to his own self-principal life. He never stopped to edict and fought like a super hero in all inauspicious situation.

### **A man of high values**

Karna was a loyal man who never forgot his past life. He was going through a lot of unspoken misgiving and trauma in his life when people used to curse him as bastard or Sutra Putra. Whatever the circumstance his wagoner parents reared him with love and care. Lord Krishna has offered him a royal hope but Karan did not reject his foster parents and decided to stay with them. He also tries to persuade Karna by offering him the opportunity to be the king of entire kingdom along with Draupadi as wife. But he denied it straightway. This is the evidence of his moral nature. Karna never failed to keep his words under any circumstances. Right from his young age he was incandescent about the prejudice against the caste system. Only for the reason he was impoverished to have proper education and training from Drona and cursed mercilessly by Parasuram. Though he is son of God Surya, he never got what he deserved in his life. Even then he had a masterly power of mighty warrior. A Yagna was conducted and at that time Karna decided to meet Bheema in their respective tents to invite him for the Yagna. Karna invited him to Champanagri. There he asked Bheema's charioteer to move and surprised Bheema asked 'Are you going to drive the chariot, Angaraj?' (38) Karna answered him without turning back I am honoured that you are visiting my capital, and it's my duty to lead your chariot. This indeed shows his kindness and his values as a loyal one even Bheema is an opponent to Karna. His life went through various tones of tragedy and sacrifice alternately. Karna throughout this epic remained beholden to his dear friend even though he knew that he is on the wrong track of Adharma. But he never failed to show the kind respect to Duryodhana showered upon him even at his most critical situation of his life. Karna was a true and loyal friend to Duryodhana for not just getting identity. Before entering into the battle field he was aware of the outcome that he is going to face. Even then he never discards his friendship and kept his words intact even sacrificing his own life. He was accurate enough to see that what Duryodhana was

doing wrong. Even then Karna was an active participant who impel Duryodhana many times. This shows how loyal he is.

### **Karna- A Tragic Hero**

Karna was a sympathetic man because he pardons his mother Kunti who had abandoned him by birth and she never confesses him even when he was around her. Kunti approaches Karna and asked him not to kill four of her sons in the Kurukshetra war and he can fight with Arjuna and use his Brahmastra only once on Arjuna. Now Karna should fight with Arjuna because of his duty towards Duryodhana and he want to keep up his promise towards his dear friend. Arjuna was under the protection of Krishna and he would never let Arjuna to die. By knowing all the consequence that will be happening around him even then he stayed loyal for his friend and has respect for his mother and brothers by sacrificing his own life. When Karna came to know the truth about his birth and his brothers (Pandavas) he never told the truth to his brothers and his dear friend or anyone around him. If he tells the truth to Pandavas it may affect them emotionally and they may give the throne to him. And this may mislead to Duryodhana. To keep up the promise he preferred to die for his friend. He never misused the truth he came to know from Kunti for his own benefits. He was self-made man. He never got the recognition of want a prince used to get. He was a great Archer and he was also good in handling all kinds of weapons in those times in the war. He defeats regions in all the directions single handed. He never violated the rules in the Kurukshetra war even others did it. He fought ethically in the war and made a stand for him. Though he stood in the side of Adharma he followed Dharma in each and every war. In the Kurukshetra war Arjuna was under the guidance of Lord Krishna, when Karna step down to move his chariot wheel which stuck adamantly in the sand as per the curse on Karna. "The wheel of the chariot! Isn't it the same as the wheel of life, the wheel of dharma?" (246) He was not able to lift the chariot wheel at the same time he recalls how to use the 'Brahmastra'. In the meantime, Arjuna administered the terrible weapon 'Anjalikastra' on Karna. His death was also tragic though full of courage, valour and honor that took him to rise to immortality beyond the moral death.

## Conclusion

The character of Karna gives us a pragmatic message that, don't give up on how society looks on you or how awkward the situation you may fall or you may not get what you deserve, just stick to the principle and strive for greatness in discharging their duties. Here Ranjith Desai keenly explains the character Karna and the struggles faced by him and how he came to know his true identity and removes his loneliness and how he led his life with his own morals and ethics. Here was a culture where Karna is a kind of anti-hero, but he became the hero of the oppressed of all those who fight against an unjust society. Today Karna stands as a role model for the fight against discrimination. And where he proved to be a protagonist in the epic *Mahabharata*.

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