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Beyond Bloodline: Matriarch's Political Agency and the Architecture of Dynastic Power in Kavita Kane's The Fisher Queen's Dynasty

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Abstract

Ved Vyasa's Mahabharata is one of the prominent epics in Indian mythology. It has influenced the culture, architecture, traditions, and lifestyle of India. A dynamic narrative considered a treasure, it reflects the righteousness, morals, integrity, and virtues of an individual and social life. The epic possesses various enlightening sections, many chapters, and a final instructive section, the Bhagavad Gita—a life manual offering moral implications for all living entities to live a life in the way of dharma. Even though it is full of a power-packed narrative description of heroes, kings, warriors, and their wars, struggles, challenges, achievements, and divine powers, there is always a lack of women's voices who were skilfully impressive in their lives. The emerging trend of retelling myths from a feminist point of view has done justice to marginalized women characters while transforming the attention of readers from canonical characters to fragmented, overlooked personae. Kavita Kane's The Fisher Queen's Dynasty demonstrates the protagonist, Satyavati, as a matriarch of Hastinapur known for her political agency, strategy, ethical leadership, and as the real architect of the Kuru dynasty, instead of being shown merely as an ambitious queen and catalyst of the Kurukshetra war. This article examines how Satyavati resisted and stood as a lighthouse for her bloodline while establishing her authority, strategic intelligence, and negotiating patriarchal structures.

Keywords: Political agency, Retellings, Dynasty, Feminist, Mythology, Indian English Fiction

Introduction

The ancient Sanskrit epic, Mahabharata, which holds universal themes like justice, power, morality, ideology, and philosophy, was composed around 500–400 BCE; it has various adaptations, different versions, and retellings, but it never loses its contemporary relevance. Mythological storytelling and myth hold a unique place, serving as an instrument in every part of our culture and acquiring a cardinal position in society, which offers perception and comprehension behind every reason. Mythological stories have canonical authority among characters; this leads minor personae to be forgotten and inaccessible. Men in mythology are always portrayed as victorious, powerful, conquering gods with supernatural powers, while treating women as merely inferior in nature. Alicia Ostriker pointed out that "mythology seems an inhospitable terrain for a woman writer" (1982, P.71). As far as myth is concerned, it acts as a canvas for revisionist writers to implement their perspectives in legends. Recent writers like Amish Tripathi, Kavita Kane, Ashok Banker, Karthika Nair, Ashwin Sanghi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anand Neelakantan, Pratibha Ray, Devdutt Pattanaik, and Rajiv G. Menon have immersed themselves in Indian myth and emerged as retelling writers with new perspectives to present overlooked characters as more complex and in various magnitudes rather than conventional, stereotypical characters or carbon copies of the archetypal myth. In Myth and the Indian Novel in English, Jaya Prasad elucidates that myth "is a living force…It almost manages the life of a man from dawn to dusk" (2021, p.19). Myth acts as a source and blueprint for learning social norms, values, culture, civilization, moral codes, philosophy, politics, and beliefs. On the whole, myth is the operating system of the human community in everyday life. Frye says, "Myth is a conception permeating many areas of

contemporary thought" (1970, p.587). Modern writers have been reinterpreting ancient myths to challenge identity, gender roles, and hierarchies of moral and social authority to reflect contemporary social and political concerns and present marginalized characters as accessible, while maintaining the same context of the original text. The arrival of retelling novels of mythology has acquired tremendous popularity among readers and researchers, connecting with future generations as well.

Hence, it is important to find the space and an identity for women in the male dominated society. Mostly in ancient times women were excluded from the genre of writing to express their views and thoughts be it written or oral. Cixous says, "I wished that women would write... my desire have invented new desires, my body knows unheard of songs" (1976, p.876). The revision resonates the reality of contemporary life and it impacts in shaping the individual identities with optimistic vision.Feminist retelling writer Kavita Kane is known for portraying female characters from a feminist perspective and depicting them as intellectually complex and nuanced individuals without manipulating their traits and qualities while negotiating social outlooks, canonical authority, and political realities. Giving much importance to retelling old myths and legends, Kane has written female-centric mythological narratives which include Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen, Sita's Sister, Menaka's Choice, Lanka's Princess, The Fisher Queen's Dynasty, Ahalya's Awakening, The Saraswati's Gift, and Bhima's Wife that give agency to female characters and develop their stories in depth while subverting traditional narratives. The present paper explores a comparatively under-narrated woman of the Mahabharata, Satyavati in The Fisher Queen's Dynasty, and the inner workings of her intellect, ambitions, trauma, fear, and insecurities as she emerges to be an independent and determined person of her ambitions, whereas in the traditional epic, she is only remembered through Bhishma and Shantanu as being preoccupied, selfish, callous, and marginal. Mostly she is reduced to the figure of a conventionally ambitious woman whose decisions, desire for power, and status disrupt the social organization of patriarchy.

Unlike male characters who fight with weapons and armies, Satyavati's intellect acts as a weapon to negotiate power, legitimacy, marriage, motherhood, legacy, and strategic manipulation, whose political decisions shape the history of the Kuru dynasty, making her significance inseparable from the succession of her kingdom. Simone de Beauvoir's statement in The Second Sex, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (2011, p. 283), is relevant to the reconstruction of Satyavati's personality in the novel. One's identity is not predestined in nature; rather, it is shaped more violently through uninterrupted struggles. The study contains the following objectives:

- To examine Satyavati's transformation from a mere peripheral woman of the fisher community to the matriarch of the Kuru clan.
- To demonstrate how Kavita Kane's feminist retelling disrupts the canonical text to represent the character, Satyavati.
- To investigate marriage, motherhood, and childbirth as political constitutions in the formation of dynastic legitimacy.
- To examine the political agency of Satyavati and her feminine autonomy through supremacy, discretion, and succession planning.
- To examine the architecture of the Kuru dynasty and the ethical leadership of dynastic continuity.

2. Review of Literature

A study on "Satyavati: The Enigmatic Woman in Kavita Kane's The Fisher Queen's Dynasty" by Krishna Chatur Sow Mondal and S. Lavanya investigates Satyavati's identity, marginality, ambition, and her past traumatic experiences. However, it emphasized identity and aspiration while refraining from fully analyzing political agency. The protagonist's decisions are influential not simply because of her expression of desire for personal development, but because they are involved in the advancement of the entire kingdom. Thus, this study requires additional attention to investigate the distinction between ambition as a psychological characteristic and agency as a political practice. Occupying a limited position in the canonical representation of the epic, Mahabharata, Kane illustrates the character of

Satyavati from the margin to the centre of attention in a socially complex narrative. The contribution of existing scholarship is relevant to the present study's objectives because it establishes that the ambition of Satyavati cannot be detached from social activity.

Shirshendu Chakraborty and Srabani Basu's article, "Humanising the Dehumanised: Kavita Kané's Reconstruction of the Great Epic," presents an important outlook on Kane's rewriting of mythological women. The article investigates Kane's engagement with the epic, Mahabharata, and her constant effort to reconstruct marginalized female characters who have usually been placed within extremely conventionalized ethical and cultural constructions. Within a conventional reading, her interventions may be interpreted as ambitious or manipulative. In a conventional narrative, her involvement may be taken as ambitious or scheming. Satyavati's decisions, actions, and authority are strictly tied to marriage, motherhood, legitimacy, and lineage, and are consequently understood as responses to a patriarchal political structure.

Judith Butler's Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity provides a theoretical root for analyzing the protagonist Satyavati's transformation of identities. Butler confronts the statement that gender represents a permanent or fixed identity. Instead, she examines how gender is performed through repetitive social practices and expectations. This framework can be used to interpret Satyavati's transformation from a mere fisherwoman to the queen of Hastinapur and ultimately to the position of matriarch. Therefore, Butler's framework allows the present study to investigate the conventional opposition between submission and resistance. Satyavati does not always challenge patriarchy through a direct rejection of actions or decisions, but through her agency to operate within patriarchal institutions and intentionally manipulate their circumstances. This perspective contributes to the study by examining Satyavati's feminine autonomy through superiority, diplomacy, and succession planning. The concept of power is further analyzed through Satyavati's use of discretion. Michel Foucault's understanding of power as relational, rather than plainly possessed by a supreme authority, provides a useful theoretical source for such an analysis. Through relationships among Shantanu, Bhishma, Satyavati, her sons, and her daughters-in-law, power was widely circulated. But Satyavati's political importance developed from her ability to influence those people and redirect their outcomes toward dynastic succession for the welfare of her bloodline.

Nisha Tyagi and Kumar Gautam Anand, in their article "Rereading Minor Women Characters of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata through Their Contemporary Adaptation in the Novels of Kavita Kane", examine the position of women who occupy marginal space in ancient canonical epics. The authors further discuss how contemporary retellings create an opportunity to re-examine female characters whose identities were misrepresented or silenced in patriarchal narratives. However, the treatment of Kane's women characters provides room for investigating the functions of Satyavati's agency within the political institutions of marriage, motherhood, and the continuity of succession. This study develops their discussion by investigating Satyavati not merely as a woman who acquires a space and voice, but as a dynamic participant in the process of dynasty construction.

Hence, existing scholarship provides a foundation for the present study. It moves away from typical themes like victimhood and empowerment. And it examines Satyavati as an architect of dynastic continuity. It argues that Kane's feminist revision technique converted Satyavati from a marginal woman into a dynamic woman. And it also exposes the condition of a woman, who is situated at the junction of gender, class, legitimacy, and political authority. To design the political trajectory of a dynasty, these women strategically fit into the institutions of identity, marriage, motherhood, reproduction, and succession. In this way, The Fisher Queen's Dynasty reinterprets dynastic history not just as an achievement entirely of males, but as a powerful construction in which women's political agency plays a constitutive part.

3. Research methodology and theory

The study adopts a qualitative textual analysis of primary and secondary sources through feminist literary criticism. A large number of critical essays, reviews, and articles on the writer's topic, characters, style, and various characteristics form the backbone of this study. The theoretical framework is based on feminist revisionist mythmaking offered by Alicia Ostriker for challenging patriarchal narratives and recovering female voices. Alicia Ostriker is a major supporter of revisionist mythology. She also expands the concept through the following approach: "The figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible" (72). It also draws on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of Subalternity (examining the voices of marginalized people who stand outside the circle of hegemonic power structures) for placing the work of Kane in the context of marginalized voices, Satyavati's position outside influential power, and the representation of socially oppressed women. Although previous studies and scholarship sufficiently read Satyavati in terms of identity, ambition, caste, patriarchy, empowerment, and political cognizance, they tend to overlook problems of political ethics, authenticity, and governance. But the relationship between her agency and the mechanisms of dynastic power—specifically marriage, bearing offspring, and legitimacy—and her position as a political strategist whose determination reframed the structure of authority (rather than portraying her simply as a fisher girl, mother, and queen) is prefigured in this study. The questions that are raised in the novel by Kane are fundamental:

- How is Satyavati's character reconstructed as a politically empowered woman rather than a marginalized character?
- Whether Satyavati accomplished political agency or reproduced it against the structure of patriarchy.
- How a powerless girl can influence political structures and operate them through her relationships, reproduction, acquisition, negotiation, and succession.

4. Analytical Chapters

The analysis is divided into thematic sections which establish Satyavati as one of the most forceful political leading figures in modern retelling narratives and contemporary Indian English fiction, exposing the enduring consequences of mythological narratives on individuality, surrounding, society, authority, political institutions, and historical representation.

4.1 From Marginality to Matriarchy

The leading character in Kane's novel, Satyavati, was an abandoned baby right after her birth, born to King Uparichara Vasu and the fisherwoman, Adrika. The fisherwoman dies after giving birth to twins, a girl and then a boy. The King willingly accepts the baby boy to be his heir and leaves the girl child to Dashraj: "I shall keep the boy with me. You can have the girl" (Kane, 2017, p. 4). Hence, she was adopted and raised by the brother of Adrika, Dashraj, as a mere fisher girl in a marginalized society. Satyavati understood she was "denied her birth right for being a girl" (Adhikary, 2021, p. 117). The author depicts her as an intelligent, well-educated girl; still, she is aware of her lower class and dislikes her miserable living conditions, as Kane states: "She detested the way the nobles and royalty lived their lives, while she was cursed to a life of hard work and stench, with no hope of ever bridging the gap" (Kane, 2017, p. 10). She is agitated by the treatment of women based on gender, stating: "I am a King's daughter. Just like my twin brother who is now…the King of Matsya…Why was I denied my right?" (Kane, 2017, p. 31). From this instance, it is understood that men easily escape societal oppression and remain in the mainstream, while women are left in the corner helplessly. Prevailing gender-based discrimination clarifies the prejudice of patriarchal society by exposing the injustice of power structures that prefer male children over girls as heirs in many cultures. Discrimination based on looks and appearance still exists because of prevailing stereotypical ideas.

Satyavati begins her journey from a peripheral figure as a fisher girl—Matsyagandha, a socially inferior woman, and daughter of Dashraj—to the canonical centre as the queen mother of the Kurus and political architect of dynastic power, holding

various names like Matsyagandha, Kali, Gandhavati, Yojanagandha, Dasayi, and Gandhakali. The following lines disclose her other names: "And she thenceforth became known among men by the name of Gandhavati (the sweet-scented one) … And for this she was known by another name which was Yojanagandha (one who scatters her scent for a yojana all around) … got him married to Satyavati who was also called Gandhakali" (Ganguli, bk. I, sec. LXIII).

Within the mythical realms, the influence of patriarchal norms and male-dominated power structures is revealed delicately by the author. Being in the community, Satyavati is forced to "sell fish and ferry people" (Kane 31). In that sense, people call her Matsyagandha. In the Mahabharata, it clearly states: "owing to contact with fishermen, [she] was for some time of the fishy smell" (Ganguli, book. I, Adi Parva, Section LXIII). She wants to get rid of that rotten fishy smell from her. Satyavati knows well "how a passing lady visibly shrank from her, her face twisted in distaste, clamping her nose with her hand as if to keep the odour at bay" (Kane, 2017, p. 11). Her encounter with Rishi Parashara, who composed many Vedic texts, becomes the life-changing moment. As she ferries people across the river Kalindi, Rishi Parashara arrives in the boat and confesses his desire for her. She makes demands of him in exchange for her body, reflecting: "What would the rishi give me?" (Kane, 2017, p.16). Then the transformation happens through the magical power of Parashara, wherein the fishy odour of Matsyagandha is transformed into the musky fragrance of Yojanagandha, which entices anyone, causing her power to allure men to rise tremendously. In Satyavati's life "Rishi Parashar acts as a catalyst" (Mahato et al., 2021, p. 251). She is completely aware of her situation, sexuality, and the structure of a hegemonic society, as she questions: "So how do I go back to the world I come from?… Who will marry me?" (Kane, 2017, p. 18). Satyavati is ambitious and tactful enough that she does not want to live the life of her mother as a victim after a sexual encounter, so she uses her desires as a sharp weapon to put forth conditions to Rishi Parashara in return for the sexual favor. Eventually, Rishi Parashara miraculously gives her the boon of restored virginity even though she gives birth to a baby boy, assuring her that he will look after the exceptional, genius child, Vyasa.

Her childhood evolved from the traumatic experience of abandonment, which develops "internal representations of being bad, incompetent, and unworthy or beliefs in a threatening world and dangerous others" (Ringel & Brandell, 2012, p. 5). Trauma is a term used to describe a severe and disruptive experience that has a profound impact on a person's emotional well-being and perception of the world around them. It can lead to feelings of psychological distress, and it can also affect an individual's ability to function normally (Balaev, 2018). Satyavati never lets these traumatic events bring her down; instead, she transforms that experience into diplomatic prowess and a venerable personality. As Satyavati always craves royalty and power, she grabs the opportunity presented by the approach of King Shantanu of Hastinapur. She displays no eagerness to merely join the harem of his court; rather, she wants to be Queen with full regal power. "She wants to rule and not to be ruled" (Adhikary, 2021, p. 119). Satyavati is already aware of men who use women for their happiness and leave them like garbage in the trash. When the King proposes to her, "I shall take you with me, keep you with me always" (Kane, 2017, p. 66), she mocks him quietly, questioning her position with the remark: "As your concubine but not consort?" (Kane, 2017, p. 66). She tries to disrupt the historical practice of treating marginalized women simply as objects for physical needs. But most of the time, women's social, official, and legal recognition is denied. Kane transforms the common disadvantage of marginality into the state from which Satyavati builds her political consciousness.

Satyavati and her father, Dashraj, strategically navigate power structures to achieve her dynastic objectives, as she reflects: "I learnt to love like a man — to love without feelings, And I shall never forget this lesson in my life" (Kane, 2017, p. 42). Her hunger for identity, power, authority, and validity transforms her from the state of Yojanagandha to Queen of Hastinapur. Aditi Dirghangi rightly conveys about Satyavati that her journey from a fisher girl to becoming the queen of Hastinapur is accomplished through sheer intelligence (2020, p.

128). Kane's transformation of Matsyagandha into Satyavati is not simply a change of body. But it symbolizes the protagonist's gradual progress from an externally defined identity to a self-fashioned political identity. Instead of viewing women as passive subjects of representation, Elaine Showalter's gynocritical approach promotes readers to look at women as producers of knowledge. (1977, p. 131). Kane's Satyavati represents this principle. Satyavati is not simply remembered by a period of history. But she actively interprets history and imitates upon political decisions.

4.2 Rewriting the Epic Woman- Mahabharata's Satyavati with Kane's Satyavati

Satyavati occupies a contradictory position in the old epic, Mahabharata. This consequential woman is responsible for the construction and continuation of the Kuru dynasty. Yet the epic does not provide sufficient access to her psychological processes, political strategies, and personal motivations. Her autonomy, intelligence, legitimacy, decision-making skills, and succession plans were hidden. Portraying her as a villainous, ambitious, self-oriented woman who was abhorred by the people of Hastinapur was the traditional version of her storyline. But Kane's retelling revisits the same episodes by shifting narrative attention from the consequences of her actions to the consciousness behind them. Satyavati's persona is analyzed by comparing the old narrative, Mahabharata, and Kane's The Fisher Queen's Dynasty. The difference between the two narratives lies not merely in the quantity of descriptions about Satyavati, but in the way in which her agency is constructed. In the Mahabharata, she is identified as the daughter of the chief of fishermen. When King Shantanu plans to marry her, Dashraj establishes a condition under which her son will be the heir of the Kuru dynasty. The political consequences of this condition are intense, as Bhishma (Devavrata) subsequently abandons his position as prince and relinquishes the throne. Bhishma declares: "The son that may be born of this maiden shall be our king" (Mahabharata, Adi Parva, Section C). This statement reveals that Satyavati's marriage is indivisible from the notion of dynastic continuity. The story swiftly moves towards the sacrifice and the identity formation of Devavrata (Bhishma). However, Satyavati is the cause of political transformation, story attention is directed towards the sacrifice of Bhishma. Kane's retelling strategy changes this prominence by bringing Satyavati's consciousness into the centre of the political circumstances. Reflecting upon her status, position, future, and her relationship with men and power, Satyavati states, "If men can use women, why can't women get something out of men?" (Kane, 2017, p. 32).

While reading the Mahabharata, readers know what Satyavati's circumstances produced in the dynasty. But Kane's narrative allows readers to consider what Satyavati herself wants to produce through those complex situations. This distinction is subtle, but it is considerable here. The old epic finds her importance through dynastic consequences, whereas Kane's retelling establishes her importance through intention. In the Mahabharata, Satyavati's birth begins with a fairy-tale element, born to an Apsara (celestial being), which goes as follows: "And in those waters dwelt an Apsara of the higher rank, known by the name of Adrika, transformed by a Brahmana's curse into a fish…From the stomach of that fish came out a male and a female child of human form…She left her fish form and assumed her own celestial shape" (Ganguli, bk. I, Adi Parva sec. LXIII).

Here the writer, Vyasa, brings the character of Adrika as a celestial being who descends to earth as a result of a curse and assumes the form of a fish. By employing the technique of magical realism, the writer legitimizes the narrative while obscuring Adrika's marginalized identity. This narrative tendency reflects patriarchal ideas where a woman's significance is admitted only through exceptional beauty, divine origin, aristocratic traits, or supernatural status rather than through the simple life experience and agency of marginalized women. The problem here is not simply about the author's usage of supernatural elements; the issue is the displacement of the fisherwoman's life and identity by a supernatural identity. Thus, her experience as a mere fisherwoman is not allowed in the original narrative to remain the centre of her characterization. Moreover, it is vividly mentioned that King Uparichara Vasu, biological father of

Satyavati, abandoned her at birth, taking away the boy because he wished for him to be the crown prince in the kingdom of Matsya, while giving the girl child to the fisherman. This partiality toward a son clarifies that everyone demands male heirs to be their successors in a patriarchal society. This decision separated Satyavati from her sibling as well as from her regal family, expelling her to a life determined by her gender. As stated, "The male child amongst the two was taken by Uparichara…given by the king unto the fisherman, saying 'Let this one be thy daughter." (Ganguli, bk. I, Adi Parva sec. LXIII). But in Kane's retelling, this patriarchal notion of demanding a male child as heir is eradicated. In Satyavati's words: "I want an heir, Dev; be it a girl or a boy. If so destined, a daughter might rule Hastinapur" (Kane, 2017, p. 284). Even though Satyavati is mentioned frequently in the old narrative, her individuality is compressed; there are insufficient details regarding her intelligence, agency, negotiation skills, and political strategies.

In the Mahabharata, Satyavati's marriage with Shantanu changes the future of the Kuru dynasty, whereas Kane gives greater consideration to Satyavati's understanding of her new political identity. When Shantanu declares his power as king, Satyavati reflects: "I am your wife, your queen. I sit with you on the throne, sharing space and thought" (Kane, 2017, p. 139). This statement is significant because Satyavati does not identify herself through her bond with King Shantanu. The addition of "your queen" gives the bond a political aspect. She recognized herself with the institution of monarchy. Hence, Satyavati in Kane's narrative is promoted socially through marriage and also, she actively interprets and negotiates the political authority associated with her queenship.

Table 1: Examining comparatively the character of Satyavati in Mahabharata and in Kane's The Fisher Queen Dynasty

Canonical perspective	**Kane's Reconstruction**
Peripheral and Marginalized character	Central Protagonist
Fisher Woman/ Cause of Bhishma's vow	Political subject/ Political negotiator
Wife/ Object of Male desire	Strategist/ Negotiator of desire
Mother of heirs/ Queen mother	Architect of succession/ Political authority

4.3 Motherhood and childbirth as political authority

Motherhood is not restricted to the realm of love, affection, care, and biological reproduction. For Satyavati, motherhood becomes inseparable from the subject of inheritance, legitimacy, dynastic succession, and political continuity. This depiction is noteworthy because Satyavati enters the dynasty as an outsider; she was not born into or raised with regal privilege. Yet she negotiated her position within it. Therefore, through motherhood, Satyavati transforms social marginality into dynastic power. Her mother's plight taught her the intense consequences of a woman's weakness within a patriarchal society. For that reason, Satyavati refuses to accept the position of a defenseless woman. She reveals that she "would rather be branded" than become "a forgotten casualty, as my mother was" (Kane, 2017, p. 32). This declaration is significant because it establishes the psychological basis for her political ambition. Her ambition is expressed through her desire to be "The Queen of Hastinapur." She does not merely seek to become the wife of Shantanu; rather, she seeks the political rights attached to queenship. Satyavati incorporates motherhood with political authority when she explicitly addresses the people of Hastinapur about her son's birth. She declares: "I am the mother of your prince as well" (Kane, 2017, p. 147). Satyavati sets up a connection between her private maternal identity and the public political community by declaring herself the mother of "your prince". Kane's retelling represents motherhood as a form of political mediation. Here, Satyavati mediates between her son and Bhishma, her family and the kingdom, and the private sphere of royal domestic life and the public sphere of legitimacy. The relationship between childbirth and dynastic power is strengthened by the portrayal of Satyavati after the birth of her sons. The child

embodies authority, legitimacy, succession, and the continuity of the political position that Satyavati struggled to obtain.

Satyavati did not easily enter the Kuru dynasty through marriage; she negotiated the position of her descendants on the throne as a constitutional moment in the formation of her dynasty. Satyavati's motherhood goes beyond the biological and emotional dimensions. It becomes a method of political progression to maintain the lineage of the Kuru dynasty. After the death of her son, Chitrangada, she experiences death as a mother. However, she responds simultaneously as the protector of dynastic continuity. She states that "A queen needs to be more sensible than just sensitive" (Kane, 2017, p. 210). Satyavati does not eliminate maternal emotion from her life but acts as a queen in a regal position beyond misery. Vichitravirya's death deepens the crisis even more. She is mainly concerned with the chance of the end of the Kuru dynasty without any heirs. The political consequences prompt Satyavati to state: "A kingdom without an announced heir was like a rudderless boat, thrown adrift in a tossing river" (Kane, 2017, p. 269). This metaphor transforms childbirth into a matter of political survival. The production of an heir becomes a political necessity, as the dynasty would lose its direction without a successor. When her widowed daughters-in-law are immersed in the grief of their husband's death, she retorts, "An effective queen must remain unemotional when the kingdom and the people are vulnerable" (Kane, 2017, p. 276). After Satyavati realizes that there is no natural successor to ensure the survival of the dynasty, she decides to invoke the institution of niyoga. She calls upon her son, Vyasa (born of Rishi Parashara), to participate in niyoga with her daughters-in-law. Her intervention in reproductive arrangements becomes an essential component of the continuation of her dynasty.

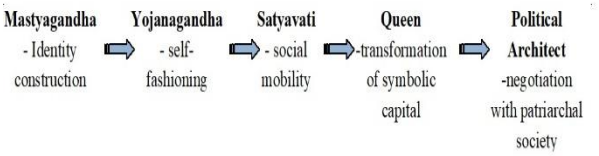
The term Niyoga is stated in the Garuda Purana as "a practice that legally permitted intercourse of a married woman to obtain a son with a male other than her husband" (Shastri, 1978, p. 330). Devdutt Pattanaik relates this concept of Niyoga in his book, Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata to the story of Guru Brihaspati and his wife, Tara. Following a sexual encounter with Lord Chandra, Tara begets a child; nevertheless, the child is considered Brihaspati's son, not Lord Chandra's. Likewise, when the death of Satyavati's son, Vichitravirya, leaves the throne heirless, both brothers, Dhritarashtra and Pandu, are born through the practice of Niyoga. The birth of the Pandavas also occurs through Niyoga; when Pandu is cursed, he allows his wives Kunti and Madri to beget children from different gods.

Satyavati retorted, "And through niyog, I am giving the same powers to my daughters-in-law…it is the women who give birth and create a new life, a new hope" (Kane, 2017, p. 284). To challenge the stereotypical norms of patriarchy, Satyavati decides impartially and independently in favor of gender equality. Her ideology behind that decision is highly remarkable. Thus, childbirth becomes part of the architecture of power. Reproduction turns into a political instrument where motherhood, authority, and legitimacy are interconnected. Therefore, it is the architecture of dynastic power where motherliness and reproductive agency serve as the foundation for building, preserving, and expanding political authority. That is why Satyavati is the real architect of the Kuru dynasty, whose decisions, procreative strategies, determination of succession, and continuity of lineage redefine the structure of dynastic power, through which Satyavati's political influence extends across both family and dynasty.

Unlike another typical Indian woman who is meek, docile, and serene, sitting at evening sunset in temples, blaming gods for her present life or waiting for some fortunate time to change her situation, Satyavati creates her own destiny through her master plans and indomitable decisions like a contemporary ideal woman. She proudly says: "I – not Fate or God – shall be responsible for my own happiness…I will not be the victim anymore" (Kane, 2017, p. 31). Reference to the article by Lopamudra Adhikary clearly states about Satyavati's character, "Kane's Satyavati is a self-confident, undaunted woman…. fits in this image of a modern woman" (2021, p. 119). In one of her interviewswith Krithika, Kane calls Satyavati "the most political person in the epic" and also describes her as a woman who "ruled her own future and her family and the kingdom" (2020, para.

3). Hence, Satyavati's transformation from fisher girl to queen and eventually to matriarch occurs through her political negotiation, achieved not by quitting her identity as a mother, but by politicizing motherhood. Satyavati's motherhood is personal, social, and simultaneously political. Thus, through this analytical section, it should be understood that Kane reconstructs Satyavati as one of the central architects of dynastic power. The preceding analysis fulfills the objectives of this study.

Table 2: Satyavati's transformation as a political architect



5. Findings and Discussion

Satyavati's transformation, not simply from a fisherwoman (Kali/Matsyagandha) to the Queen of Hastinapur, but as a powerful political architect, represents a conscious shedding of her subaltern characteristics to emerge as an ultimate authority. Abandoned by her biological father, King Uparichara Vasu, and raised by her foster father, Dashraj, as an outcaste, she uses her drawbacks like low caste and marginalization as a catalyst to become an exceptional personality. Kane ultimately transforms the meaning of Satyavati's ambition and determination. In the original epic, Satyavati is morally condemned by readers for her decisions that lead to political disruptions, and her demands of King Shantanu are viewed as selfish, preoccupied, and the reason for Bhishma's sacrifice. But Kane gives Satyavati history, motivation, trauma, ambition, intelligence, and political reasoning. Rather than simply condemning her actions or making moral judgments, one should understand the historical and psychological contexts behind her actions. Satyavati's premarital childbirth with Rishi Parashara becomes a transaction for receiving a boon and physical transformation to remain ever young and scented with fragrance that captivates men even from miles away. And her marriage to King Shantanu is not born out of romantic union or physical attraction alone; it is entirely Satyavati's political negotiation of a legal contract over succession for her bloodline. Sometimes marriage becomes a mechanism through which one enters and reconstructs the structure of power.

Satyavati's motherhood is connected with inheritance, legitimacy, continuity, and political stability.Motherhood becomes political succession. Even when her sons fail to produce an heir, her intervention and invocation of the ancient practice of Niyoga marks a political turning point. She preserves dynastic continuity and prevents a power vacuum. Her motherhood signifies a domestic identity as well as an identity for the entire dynasty. Satyavati's agency is authoritative and influential, but it is also ethically ambiguous. She acts with rare resolve and decisiveness. Her actions produce both dynastic strength and heavy consequences. Her leadership ability gives priority to the survival of her bloodline and dynasty over morality. Her plan relies on sacrifice, tension, and moral compromise. She builds a powerful empire while compromising individual ethics.

6. Conclusion

Kavita Kane portrayed the inner psyche of women characters deeply and voiced their inner self and asserted their identity within the patriarchal patterns. She recreated every character to be powerful, sensuous and ambitious. In The Fisher Queen's Dynasty, Kane brings Satyavati into the limelight of central political consciousness from an ambivalent persona in the classical narrative, Mahabharata. Satyavati's decisions and actions regulate, build, and sustain dynastic power dynamically. Satyavati's trajectory demonstrates how a dynasty is constructed, protected, and inherited through bloodlines. Satyavati's journey from a humble fisher girl to Queen Mother marks her entry into political life. Along the way, she relies on sharp negotiation and strategic decision-making to build a name for her. Although Satyavati was born a princess, her gender led to her abandonment at birth. She spent her early life in a fisher community, where she had to navigate social marginalization and strict limitations. Yet, she refuses to remain confined or constrained by the limitations of her status. Instead, she takes control of her circumstances, shaping an identity driven by ambition, empowerment, and legitimacy. In the

canonical Mahabharata, Satyavati is primarily framed through her relationships with King Shantanu and Bhishma, serving mainly to continue the Kuru bloodline. But in Kane's revisionist intervention, she is the conscious political subject of Hastinapur, where the power structure and future of the Kuru dynasty are determined by her dynamic decisions. The life Satyavati lived is itself a response to a patriarchal social order that excludes women from authority, inheritance, governance, dominance, and recognition. Not depending on destiny, she refused the identity of a marginalized fisherwoman forever and reconstructed it to develop her individuality. This act of refusal became the foundation of her regal identity.

Satyavati emerged as a strategic agent during the episode with Rishi Parashara; she did not succumb to conditions, but rather made demands of him. Primarily, Satyavati's identity was constructed through the transformation from Matsyagandha to Yojanagandha to cross social boundaries. In that sense, she planned, designed, and constructed the terms as an architect for how she would be perceived, valued, identified, and remembered. From the personal to the established regal domain, her identity was extended through architectural agency at the moment of her marriage with King Shantanu. Rather than acting as a passive wife within the household, Satyavati negotiated the very structure of hymeneal alliance. She transformed her marriage into a political agreement by laying down explicit conditions to guarantee her children would inherit the throne. The narrative of Kane clearly states that motherhood does not simply function biologically and domestically. Rather, it operates as a political structure for regulating lineage, legitimacy, and succession continuity. Satyavati's presence of mind following her son Vichitravirya's death demonstrates her logical thinking. Even in a moment of crisis, her calculative reproductive strategy in introducing the practice of Niyoga for succession is highly noticeable. These interventions reveal the protagonist as an outstanding designer of dynastic history. Various domains like identity formation, marital negotiation, reproductive strategy, social mobility, and succession planning are designed. And it was operated through her actions for constructing a consistent political architecture. Power is not granted; it is strategically constructed. The journey from Matsyagandha to political architect reflects a cumulative process of Satyavati's agency. As the architect of dynastic succession, Satyavati designed the power structure through which the Kuru bloodline survives.

Satyavati emerges as a personality whose power is enabling, binding, and transformative. Satyavati redesigns the internal mechanisms of patriarchy while dismantling unwanted layers of norms to serve dynastic continuity. Ultimately, Kavita Kane's The Fisher Queen's Dynasty reconstructs Satyavati as a political architect of the Kuru dynasty. She changed the narrative from being morally judged to being appreciated. The reader should reconsider Satyavati's motivations, before placing her in an ambitious role. Through this, one can understand that, an ambition is a necessary form of survival and involvement for a woman excluded from political and inherited power. This study concludes that dynastic history is not exclusively the artifact of kings and warriors, but is equally designed by women. The women restructure, negotiate, and engineer the continuity of lineage while retaining its fundamentals. Satyavati reveals that the architecture of a dynasty is never fixed by masculine. Rather, it is constantly shaped by one who can convert segregation and marginality into political structure.

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