

## Conclusion

Stereotypes are the negative beliefs or thoughts about a particular individual, society, caste, culture, race, gender and sex. Stereotypes are used for discrimination and differentiation. These are based on the prior assumptions. So, they have negative essence. They are created for gaining power and influence over others. It is not necessary that they will be logical. They may be logical or illogical. Stereotypes enable us to respond quickly to the situation. But most of them create negative image.

In this research, I tried to unfold truth about two individual stereotypes, Shoorpanakha and Shakuni. The writers of these two great epics created these characters as evil characters. So they are considered villains. People stereotyped them. No one names his/her child's after their names. Shoorpanakha is considered as a stereotype of wicked and succubus woman whereas Shakuni is a stereotype of backstabber and vicious uncle. Now nobody tries to see the reality of their characters. When we take their names, the stereotyped image of them becomes crystal clear before our eyes. They were the victims of society. The writers had concealed the partial truths related to them. So they were presented as evil characters.

Instead of the original texts of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, there are many parodies which present them differently. These parody writings tries to break these stereotypes and present them in a new form. In the later versions of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and in the folklores, their characters are deconstructed.

Deconstruction is a theory in literature. By deconstruction, it does not mean that we can make a text whatever we like. We cannot ignore the essence of the text. Derrida used a term “graphocentrism” which means the written words are more important than the speech. We should

understand the written words of the text, not the background of the author. He gave another term “decentering”. If we slightly shift the centre then meaning and essence of a text will change. The main idea of deconstruction is “... to find that centre and see what happen to the structure if you take it away.” (Klages 59) In the *Ramayana*, Rama was taken in the centre and everything was written from his point of view. But if we take Shoorpanakha in centre; the image of Shoorpanakha will completely change. And Rama and Lakshmana will become evil characters because they humiliated and ill-treated her. So in this research her changed image is shown. Now we should no longer consider her as an evil character because we live in an age of deconstruction. And when we take Shakuni in centre; then his character will seem as an oppressed, tortured and insulted character. Kuru will become evil characters because they were the cause of evil qualities in him.

Roland Barthes said that a text is a place where various voices can be heard. So the texts of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are also spaces where we can hear many voices. Among these voices, one voice of Shoorpanakha or Shakuni is that they were not evil characters.

Since ancient time, Shoorpanakha and Shakuni are considered as evil characters. They were created as negative characters to make the reason for the great battles of India. If there had been no Shoorpanakha, there would have been no *Ramayana*. Because Shoorpanakha was the cause of the battle between Rama and Ravana. And through this battle Rama is shown as a religious person, an ‘avtara’ (incarnation) of God. He was born on this earth to eradicate the menaces of rakshasas and to establish religion. If the writer had given due respect to shoorpanakha, Rama would not have become the hero of the epic. Like Shoorpanakha, Shakuni was also presented as a wicked character who incited hatred between Kauravas and Pandavas.

He was the mastermind of the battle of Kurukshetra. He was given a negative role. If he was not being there, the battle would not be started.

They were presented as evil characters because it was the need of the writer. They needed evil characters to make Rama and Pandavas hero or good characters. So they introduced these characters. But if we deconstruct these texts, we see that they were not the evil characters. They were the vengeance seekers and the victims of society.

Shoorpanakha was not an ugly figure. She was very beautiful. At the time of her birth, her parents gave her the name 'Meenakshi' which means fish shaped eyes. She had the magical power to transform her body. She introduced herself as 'Kaamavalli'. In folktales also, she was given name 'Phulvati' which means beautiful and delicate like a flower. In Indian movies also, she was delineated as one of the most stunning characters of Indian cinema. So she was not an ugly character.

Shoorpanakha was not a succubus because she did not appear in the dream of anyone and did not deceive him. Although she was a rakshasi, she did not kill anyone. After being a member of rakshasa family, she had human qualities. She could feel love which is a very human feeling. She showed pity on Rama. So she refused Khara to kill Rama because she loved him. She was a vengeance seeker. Her brother Ravana killed her husband, Dustabudhi. So she wanted to take revenge of her husband's death. Ravana was so powerful because Lord Brahma had given him a boon. She could not kill him. She waited for many years. At the end she got success in her aim.

Now-a-days we celebrate woman day and we fight for woman rights. If we look back on our ancient texts, even on our two great epics, we will find that woman was humiliated everywhere. In the *Ramayana*, Shoorpanakha was disrespected by Rama and Lakshmana. When

she saw Rama and Lakshmana in the forest, she was attracted toward them. She proposed Rama first. But he sent her to Lakshmana. And Lakshmana did not refuse and told her that he was married. They started playing with her emotions. What was the fault of Sita? She expressed her feelings and expression of feelings is not a crime. They incited her to become rude. They cheated her. And whatever Lakshmana did was completely immoral and unjust. He chopped her ear and nose. She demanded only for love. So she was a victim.

In the *Ramayana*, it is written that her ear and nose were chopped. It means that she was tortured physically. She might be raped by Lakshmana. Woman was insulted various times in our history. She was also insulted. In The *Mahabharata*, Draupadi was humiliated in an assembly by Kauravas. They tried to disrobe her. All these incidents prove that when a woman was insulted, then this earth had to bear disaster. In our patriarchal societies, whatever a man does is always considered right. He can cut the nose and ears of a woman. He can rape and disrobe a woman because it is considered his right to torture a woman. In *Sunderkanda of Ramcharitmanasa*, a couplet is written in which woman was told as a thing to be beaten. It is said that a drum, uncivilized man, 'sudra', animal and woman all are born to be beaten. Nowhere man is questioned for his deeds. Here again man is in the center. And all rules and regulations of society are created by him.

There are many evidences in history and literature that woman had to go through ordeal to prove her chastity and innocence. In the *Ramayana*, Sita had to prove her chastity through fire ordeal. After proving her innocence, she was abandoned. In *Naga Mandala* by Girish Karnad, Rani also had to prove her innocence through ordeal. Rani, unknowingly, had sexual intercourse with Naga and got pregnant. She did not know that the man who came to her in the form of her husband is Naga. So Appanna gathered the elders of society to prove his wife's infidelity. But

Naga saved her. So Rani had to prove her chastity. But her husband Appanna used to lock her in his house. And he himself spent his day and night in the arms of his concubine. No one said Appanna to go through ordeal. Because men were the creators of the rules and regulations. So they did not made any rule in which a man has to prove his fidelity.

So in the *Ramayana* the battle took place not because of Shoorpanaka, but because of Lakshmana. Shoorpanakha was not an evil character. She did everything for taking revenge. She was not vice character. She was a victim of circumstances. Circumstances and injustice created evilness in her character. She had many good qualities. She had a loving heart full of pity.

Shakuni was also a victim. It is said that Shakuni was the personification of Dwapara yuga. The yugas (ages) are divided in four kinds: Krita yuga (a best yuga), Treta yuga ( in which incident of Ramayana took place.), Dwapara yuga (in which Lord Krishna was born) and Kali yuga ( a worst yuga, which is now going on). It is said that the evilness of Dwapara yuga were ended by Lord Krishna. He was an incarnation of God. Shakuni is considered a stereotype of backstabber and vicious uncle. If we read him closely, it will clear that he was not an evil character. He was a vengeance seeker. Dhritrashtra and Bheeshma ill-treated him and his family. They attacked on Gandhara and imprisoned them. They were starved to die. Only Shakuni remained alive. So he wanted to take revenge of the death of his brothers and other family members.

Bheeshma sent proposal for the marriage of Dharitashtra with Gandhari. Dharitashtra was blind. So after her marriage, she blindfolded herself. Shakuni thought that Bheeshma was responsible for the plight of his sister. So he wanted to end Kuru clan. He hatched many plans

and mixed poison of hatred in the mind of Kauravas and Pandavas. At last he got success in his mission. He was the mastermind behind the battle of Kurukshetra. And he took revenge. But in this process of seeking vengeance, he himself lost his life. Like Shoorpanakha, Shakuni was also a victim of circumstances. He was not an evil character. It is said that 'As you sow, so shall you reap'. At last, Kurus got the fruit of their deeds. No heir of Kauravas remained alive after the war.

In this play *Thus Spake Shoorpanakha, So said Shakuni*, Poile Sengupta has presented these two mythical characters on one stage because they are connected with the theme of revenge. The theme of revenge runs throughout their life. They did everything to undo the injustice done to them. In this play, the condition of the MAN and the WOMAN is also like that of Shhorpanakha and Shakuni. They meet at the waiting lounge of an airport. They wanted to set bomb in the airport. The MAN carried a bomb in his briefcase. So they try to set bomb to take revenge. Like Shoorpanakha and Shakuni, the MAN and the WOMAN were also not evil characters. Their motto was revenge. When the characteristics of their characters were studied in the binary oppositions of good versus, then it became clear that they were victims of circumstances. No character is good or evil. What he or she does depends on the circumstances and perspectives.

## Work Cited

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