



Panch Kanya-5 Virgins of Ancient India

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ABSTRACT

Women hold significant positions in Hindu Dharma, such as Mothers, Nurturers, Provocateurs of battles, Propagators of wisdom, etc. The world initiated with Adi Shakti the one genuine pure form of power, and womanhood has developed since. Hindus adore Shakti, and Devi and idolize her existence. One such group of unique femininity is the Panch Kanya. It is considered that nature embodies itself in five forms: earth, water, fire, wind, and sky. Each Kanya is born of one of these components, and these five elements of nature create the qualities of their characters. The Panch Kanyas (the five virgins) are women characters in the two great epics of India, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Each of them is depicted as extremely beautiful and virtuous. It is accepted that only the thought of these ladies Ahilya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara, and Mandodri can disassemble sins. These are regarded Panch-Kanyas. Surprisingly, all of them are married and even have relations with other males. Let's understand if they were married, then why are they named Virgins?

INTRODUCTION

Panch Kanya is the one who possessed their virginity and could revitalize it. This power owing to their Purity was majorly the result of directing a holy, appropriate, and responsible life in thought, in word, and in action thereby the most purified and most genuine of conduct even in the most difficult times. The literal meaning of 'Kanya' means 'girl', 'maiden', or 'virgin'. Although the five females are all married, sometimes with multiple males, this was the word selected to represent them rather than the word *nari* (woman) or *sati* (chaste wife), which was then challenged by intellectuals. However, the term was picked because tradition says that the virtue of their characters is so strong, that nothing could rot their spiritual powers. Their very names are supposed to provide redemption and liberation from sin. It is not exceptional, therefore, for pious Hindus to recite their names each morning to remind them of the power they symbolize. In ancient Hindu texts and holy writings, these females are expressed as young girls and not women. They are so purified that even through the fire they could pass uninjured. Such ideal lives have only been portrayed by five women and hence they're recognized for it. Here are the five women (Panch-Kanyas) who evoked such qualities:

1) AHILYA-

The first woman is **Ahilya**, who was born of **Water**. Brahma formed her from all things beautiful, to be the symbol and carrier of beauty. Gautam Rishi's wife Ahilya was quite attractive. When the God Indra was wandering around close to the spot she lived with her husband. Indra at that point saw Ahilya and was mesmerized by her charm. One day in the absence of Gautam Rishi, Indra came to their hermitage in the mask of Gautam Rishi. Ahilya loved her husband a lot. Indra, who was changed into Gautam Rishi through enchantment, took benefit of his absence and got intimated with Ahilya.

At the moment, when they were getting close, the actual Gautam Rishi stepped in and after catching his better half in an objectionable situation with someone else, Gautam Rishi was enraged. He cursed Ahilya and transformed her into a stone. Ahilya was strongly devoted to her husband however as Indra betrayed her she was required to face the terrible punishment for the wrong she never committed. Due to her tolerance and the passion of her ascetic devotion, Ahilya was depicted as shining but hidden from the world like the sun covered by dark clouds. The point, Lord Rama stepped on it; she recovered her human form. Rama came to her side and announced her innocence in this incident. In the end, Gautama returned to her. Like the water, maintaining a firm heart through hard times, Ahilya is the embodiment of patience. That is why she is regarded as a virgin.

2) TARA-

Tara, a heavenly nymph, was born of the Wind. According to the Ramayana, Tara is the Queen of Kishkindha and spouse of the monkey (Vanara) King Vali. After being widowed, she turns into the wife of Sugriva, Vali's brother. She was an Apsara who rose from the churning of the milky ocean. After Vali is believed dead in a war with a demon, his brother Sugriva becomes monarch and accepts Tara; nonetheless, Vali returns and recaptures Tara and outcasts his brother, accusing him of disloyalty. When Sugriva challenges Vali to a fight, Tara cleverly suggests Vali not to accept because of the previous union with Rama. Vali suspected that Tara was supporting Sugriva so he deserted her. He battled with Sugriva and was killed by Sri Rama. His last words to Sugriva were to pursue what Tara says. She always wanted good for her husband even after he abandoned her.

3) MANDODRI-

Mandodri was born from the **Sky**. Mandodri was gorgeous as well as intellectual. After getting seduced by her beauty, Ravana married her. Mandodri was the daughter of the demon king Mayasura. Hema was the mother of Ravana's wife Mandodri. Being the daughter of Apsara, Mandodri was very attractive. Due to the boon of Lord Shiva, Mandodri was married to Ravana. Mandodri desired a boon from Lord Shiva that her husband be the most learned and influential on earth. Ravana was an extremely intelligent scholar. He was very proud of his power, and devotion to Lord Shankar. Ravana abducted Sita, masking himself as a beggar, while Rama was away to fetch a golden deer to delight her. In the great battle between Lord Ram and Ravana, Lord Ram killed Ravana and released his wife Sita.

After Ravana's death, Lord Rama advised the marriage of Mandodri to Vibhishana. Mandodri declined to accept this proposal. After this, once Lord Ram along with Sita, went to persuade Mandodri. Then Mandodri, a great intellectual, realized that religiously, logically, and virtuously it would not be immoral to marry her brother-in-law Vibhishana. After this, she accepted the marriage proposal. The Ramayana describes Mandodri as beautiful, holy, and moral. She is glorified as one of the Panch-Kanyas (Five Girls), the recital of whose name is believed to be Destruction of sins.

4) KUNTI-

Kunti emerged in the invocations for the Panch-Kanyas almost as often as Sita. Kunti, like Sita, also denotes the **Earth**. Her childhood name was **Pritha**, which means "**Earth**". Yaduvanshi king Surasena had a daughter named Pritha and a son named Vasudeva. Surasena handed over her to Kuntibhoja, his cousin brother who was childless. Kuntibhoja named this girl Kunti. In this way, Pritha i.e. Kunti stayed away from her real parents. Even as an adolescent, Kunti was known for her hospitality to the guests of her royal adopted father.

Kunti was lovely and intelligent. She was the wife of King Pandu of Hastinapur. She is often regarded as one of the leading ladies of the Mahabharata. It is said that one day, she pleased the sage Durvasa with her service and was given a boon that could invoke any god to produce a child. Immature and inquisitive, Kunti summoned the luminous sun god, Surya, who emerged before her and gifted her with a child named Karna. Still unmarried and worrying about bringing shame to her clan, Kunti floated the child down the river. A few years later she was married to King Pandu of Hastinapur, who was cursed to die when he intimated with his wife. Pandu asked Kunti to summon her boon and take children through the gods so that his royal clan could continue.

Along with Karna, Kunti had three more sons named Yudhishtir, Arjun, and Bhīma. Nakul and Sahadev were the sons of Madri, Pandu's second wife. Kunti, aware of her duty as a queen, called the gods again and took Yudhishtir from Dharmaraj, the god of truth, Bhīma from Vayu, the wind god and Arjuna from Indra, the king of the heavens. She then transmitted her boon with her co-wife, Madri, who took Nakul and Sahadev from the twin god of healing, the Ashvinis.

After the demise of Pandu, Madri attempted Sati on Pandu's funeral pyre, in which she ignited herself to death to join her husband in the hereafter. Kunti was then left isolated with five sons to look after. Kunti returned to Hastinapur with hers and Madri's sons, both of whom she loved and valued as if they were her own, for the rest of her life.

Kunti is an intellectual mother and woman who is skilful in analyzing situations and making the right decisions. Kunti confronted problems throughout her life. We find her fine intelligence when she motivates her sons for the war. When an epic battle between the Pandavas and Kauravas is near, Kunti reveals to Karna about being his mother and gets him to vow to her that he will not kill any other Pandav, excluding Arjuna. After the war, in which the Kauravas and Karna were destroyed, Kunti with the parents of the

Kauravas went to the forest and spent the remaining life in devotion. She died in a forest fire. Hence her courageous spirit, her responsible behavior, and her tolerance in facing all odds can be an inspiration to the current generations.

5) DRAUPADI-

Draupadi considered as one of the Panch-Kanyas or Five Virgins, is one of the most important female characters in the epic, Mahabharata. Draupadi emerged out of the **"Fire"** of the yagya performed by King Drupad, of Panchal. Arjuna won Draupadi's hand by finishing a challenging and skilful archery contest at the Swayamvar. She had won over by Arjun, but because of some misinterpretation between the five brothers and their mother, she had to wed five Pandavas. She surrendered her desires to maintain the bond powerful between 5 brothers.

Draupadi was an early feminist because she was the woman with her own opinion and not the one to pursue her husbands. She talks for herself. Draupadi was smart, and fearless and would often guide her husbands into action. Pandavas continually depend upon her for decision-making. Krishna saved her dignity when she was insulted at the court of Hastinapur. Draupadi is enraged by the Pandavas incapability to defend her. She was desperate for vengeance on Kauravas who abused her and her family. Draupadi was so dedicated to her husbands that she followed them into banishment and gave up the ease of palaces.

Draupadi was Practical and Argumentative. She had her uniqueness. In many ways, she was similar to her husbands and often handled Pandavas. She was far ahead of her time. Because of her righteous behavior, courage, and authoritarian nature, she became an icon in the history of world literature.

CONCLUSION-

The Panchakanya are all stated to have had unnatural births and were born without the involvement of the matrix of a mother's womb. Kunti, who was the only one with a mother, was handed over for adoption at birth and split from her mother. Each of them experienced the dissatisfaction of love and the suffering of loss. Ahilya was raped, Draupadi had multiple husbands, Tara and Mandodari's husbands did not hear their guidance and were destroyed, departing them to marry their respective younger brother-in-laws. The Panchakanya were the Women who were ahead of Their time. They were not the perfect ladies described in books, films, and popular legends years later, but they are the embodiment of prominent wives as recorded in ancient texts of India.

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