

## Mrityunjay: A Study In Affective Narratology

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### Abstract

*Mrityunjay* by Shivaji Sawant originally written in Marathi language is a thought-provoking retelling of Mahabharat from the point of view of Karna, the man of feelings. Along with Karna, the retelling highlights the point of view of Kunti, Karna's mother; Vrushali, Karna's wife; Duryodhan, Karna's greatest friend; Shon, Karna's Brother and Krishna. Thus, entire novel contains a compilation of interesting monologues making this work unique in its style of narratology. Second remarkable aspect of the novel is, all the characters are driven by feelings and emotions. Karna's continuous question on his identity, his mental trauma after listening to the word *sutputra*, Karna's dialogue with Kunti, Krishna and Duryodhan reveal his mental state. The narrative structure is such that it creates emotional connection with the reader. And Karna becomes immortal. Thus, it is an emotional connection which rules the experience. Thirdly, entire plot of the novel is structured in a way that it develops through monologues of the characters. So, the narrative technic, characters, chain of incidents and emotions have interwoven the story of *Mrityunjay* creating a human universe determined by emotions and feelings. That is why it becomes interesting to study *Mrityunjay* through affective narratology. In this paper, a humble effort is made to study affective patterns of the main character's personality.

As Wordsworth has rightly pointed out in his famous preface to Lyrical Ballads:

For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply. The artist is not just anybody, but an exceptional person with deep thoughts, and the work of art is marked by spontaneity and strong emotions.

**Keywords:** Affective Narratology, Emotions, Feelings, Karna

### INTRODUCTION

Mahabharat is a confluence of inspiring stories, whether it is a history or literary classic, it has ability to inspire people even today; that validates its credibility and classic sense of creation. Indian literatures contains number of classic writings which have been inspired by Mahabharat where the authors have taken liberty to retell, recreate or redefine interpretations of incidents and characters and overall message of the epic. *Mrityunjay* can be considered to be a subsidiary river of that confluence where the narrative leads towards establishing Karna as one of the most powerful and emotional heroes of the grand epic.

Shivaji Sawant scripted and carved *Mrityunjay* instilling life and blood to Karna. Entire narration is the narration of feeling and emotion. It becomes quite obvious that the writer is so much connected with Karna, Kunti and Vrushali that even reader feel connected with them. It is the captivating beauty of narration which holds the reader till the end of the story. The author has heartily created a world of emotion as he is fascinated by the character of Karna from his childhood. He was inspired by various writing on Karna like

*Karna* by Kedarnath Mishra, *Rashmirathi* by Ramdhari Singh Dinkar and *Karna Kunti Samvad* by Rabindranath Tagore.

Analysing *Mrityunjay* from the point of view of narratology and that also Affective narratology opens an interesting horizon vertically to understand the making of story, development of the story and its impact on reader. Because,

*Literary stories especially the stories we most admire and appreciate, are structured and animated by emotions. Any coherent sequence of events might constitute a story. But the story that engage us, the story we celebrate and repeat- paradigm stories- are precisely stories that move us, most often by portraying emotions or emotionally consequential events.* Pg 5 Hogan (The Mind and Its Stories)

In fact, affective narratology can not be considered altogether new theory to analyse the literary work but positively it can be said that especially Patrick Hogan has tried to establish importance of emotion in creating, developing and receiving the text. Hogan has remarked in his paper, *Passion for Plot* ;

*Emotions make stories.*

To an extent it is true because every individual is a social construct and whatever he sees, feels and thinks; there is a big role of stories behind conditioning the mind of the readers. Stories of *Mahabharat* are interwoven knowingly or unknowingly in our thoughts due to repeated celebration of these stories in the form of literary work, TV serials or movie on mass media platform. So, it can be said that we are familiar with majority of characters of the epic. Karna is one such character who has suffered a lot without having any fault of his. And *Mrityunjay* is one such endeavour to travel through the life- story of Karna and feel his various emotions like anger, love, gratitude, respect, sorrow, apprehension, jealousy, happiness and contentment and the actions and reactions guided by his emotions. Karna is a familiar figure and his story is quite known. But still, once you start reading the work *Mrityunjay*, you can't stop it until you finish it. So, what makes *Mrityunjay* unique? it is its affective narratology.

The story of *Mrityunjay* narrates the story of Karna from his birth to his final exit from the world. It retells all the important incidents closely connected to Karna from the point of view of Karna in the sequence of *Mahabharata*. The story gives voice to Kunti, Vrushali, Duryodhana, Shon and Krishna. But the effect it creates on the mind of reader is mesmerizing. In *Mrityunjay*, the writer has used the technique of Internal -Focalization: the idea given by Genette where narrator is character and he narrates through his perceptions and imagination. (Pg. 17 *Passion for Plot*) so the overall impact of the story becomes more intense.

*Mrityunjay* begins with these lines,

*I want to say something today. Some will startle hearing my words and wonder how can anyone swallowed by Death speak?...*

*From deep down from somewhere in the deepest recesses of my heart- a voice keeps calling out to me. The more I steel myself against it, the more it flares out, like a flame that a wind fans instead of extinguishing 'tell them all, tell them the story of your life...go tell them it wasn't tattered and torn, it was a rich gold bordered royal silk garment. Only-only it ripped into a thousand flocks of deer scamper excitedly in my mind.*

When a reader begins this book, he loses sight of the author and the author's perspective; all that remains is Karna — he occupies the reader's thoughts, mind, and heart entirely. The narrative is so compelling and absorbing that Karna becomes the focal point, commanding the entire stage. The story masterfully constructs an emotional landscape, immersing the reader in a tale steeped in deep, resonant emotions.

Only when the reader steps out from the text can they begin to appreciate the writer's narrative technique. The freedom given to the characters is so brilliantly executed that it feels as though they are expressing their emotions directly, in their own voices. No amount

of praise can truly capture the magnificence of the writer's narrative style because the experience it creates is unparalleled. It is as if the reader isn't just reading about Karna; they are actually living his experiences, feeling every emotion and heartbeat. The novel transcends mere reading and transforms into a profound, unforgettable experience — a cosmos of emotions that leaves a lasting impact.

So it is emotions which plays vital role in experiencing the text. It is rightly remarked by Anderson that,

*If we understand the human as primarily a social being, there is much that suggests that feelings are just as fundamental to our existence as reason. If our most basic need is belonging together with someone, then feelings are the most important condition of existence.*

*(Story and Emotion, Anderson)*

Emotion plays a central role in shaping human behaviour, cognition, and creativity across various fields. Sylvan Tomkins, in his work on emotionally based life-scripts, emphasized that emotions are the primary motivators of behaviour. Darwin, with his study in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), initiated modern scientific research into human emotion. Antonio Damasio further explored emotions on a neurobiological basis, categorizing them into primary, secondary, and background emotions, while asserting their importance in rational thought. Martha Nussbaum highlighted the intelligence of emotions, viewing them as meaningful responses to value perceptions rather than mere impulses. Similarly, Keith Oatley, in *Emotions: A Brief History* (2004), identified emotion as fundamental to understanding human affective experiences. Patrick Colm Hogan's work in affective narratology ties emotion to narrative structure, linking it with cognitive traditions. Collectively, these thinkers—alongside artists such as Robert Wilkinson and William Wordsworth—show that emotion is not only essential for rational decision-making but also serves as the foundation for artistic expression, illustrating its deep interconnectedness with reason and creativity. (Story and Emotion, Anderson)

Thus, many have tried to analyse emotion from different perspectives like neurology, ideology, tradition and culture and psychology. The ways of human reactions and responses in various situations or occurrence varies with the individual and the circumstance. Individual's brought up. environment and personal experiences play vital role in colouring his mind. and this will decide his affect in experiencing the story. It involves not only body but mind and heart to live through everything one is going through. So the bottom line is; emotion is emotion which can be felt and cannot be fully expressed through words but one can try to do that, in that process some writers get success, consequently, readers can see the world of writer through those life- less printed words and experience human universe.

That is why it becomes very interesting to analyze Mrityunjay from the Affective Narratological point of view. Affective Narratological study is based on mainly following points:

1. Only living organisms have affects, emotions or feelings. Letters of the alphabets, words, sentences and paper do not have them. Still, as humanly created phenomena they can express feelings.
2. Emotions can be instinctive, but their expression and triggers often vary across individuals and social contexts. Martha Nussbaum, in *Upheavals of Thought*, argues that emotions are shaped by both personal history and social norms (2001, 140).
3. They [Palmer and Zunshine] argue that we understand narratives by understanding the minds of the characters and narrators, that is, their intentions and motivations (Alber and Fludernik 2010,12).
4. In affective narratology, analyzing space, time, emotional stimuli, and the emotions of both main and minor characters is essential.

5. In affective narratology, time is crucial as the duration of emotions impacts people's lives differently, with impulse control varying by person and situation. Keith Oatley's concepts of reactive emotions, moods, sentiments, and preferences help describe both human and literary characters' emotional dispositions.

6. In affective narratology, the sequencing of narrative elements is key, as is spatiality. Authors use narrative devices to create emotional spaces where characters' emotions unfold, producing specific effects.

Now let us examine above listed points:

1. Only living organisms have affects, emotions or feelings. Letters of the alphabets, words, sentences and paper do not have them. Still, as humanly created phenomena they can express feelings.

The novel *Mrityunjay* is rich with emotionally charged incidents that deeply resonate with readers. Whether it's Bhishma, Kunti, or Vrushali, the characters' thoughts and dialogues are imbued with emotions that effectively stir the reader's feelings. A particularly powerful moment is when Krishna asks Karna to join him and even offers to be his charioteer—the depth of Karna's internal reflections during this scene is truly remarkable.

*My mind was welter of confused thoughts. Ignoring all the others, why had he held only my hand seated me in his chariot? Why did Sri Krishna, never one to hold another's hand, select mine of all people? My thoughts raced in consonance with the speeding chariot. From the dense bough of a mango tree, a Kokila singing merrily in all the seven notes wheeled over our chariot and vanished in the western sky. As I saw it disappear, I got a glimpse of the setting sun. (568, Mrityunjay)*

How beautifully the writer has added music to describe happy feelings in the heart of Karna! Or another interpretation can be how momentary the happy feeling was as the bird vanished in the western sky. Indication of both, positive and negative feelings has been tactfully touched upon by the author. That particular imagery of bird is also indicative of Karna's response to Krishna's proposal to join Pandava's tent.

And further when Karna was told his real identity that he is the son of Kunti and Sun-God, he exclaimed with joy:

*I wanted to shout, "I am the Sun-God's son, I am the Sun-God's son" and rush around dancing in joy, I wanted to roar out, "I am the Sun-God's son" in front of all those who had all these years heartlessly crushed the vesture of my life in social conventions and flung it in the dust of crass of selfishness 'I am the Sun-God's son I am the son of Pure Energy, I am not unworthy, I am not contemptible'(569, Mrityunjay) The joy of the boy was indescribable. As if Karna was confirming his belief of what he was striving for. But gradually his mind got into a turmoil. Each word of Krishna dashed like a towering wave of emotion on the shores of his mind. In an instance, his entire life whirled across his eyes. Krishna pressed him to join Pandava but he dug his heel on the ground and firmly said, As a recipient of the pure affection of Duryodhana for me, I have enjoyed for years the princely pleasure as vast as the ocean, how can you expect me to push Duryodhana inside the deep pit of betrayal... (573 Mrityunjay)*

Karna humbly said to Krishna that he cannot leave Radhamata like he who left Yoshodamata. At this point the author is comparing Karna with Krishna. Krishna was Kshatriya but brought up like gwalio, a cow grazer. Because there is no other match to Karna.

Karna's conversations with Kunti is filled with deep emotion, highlighting his internal struggles. His brother Shon holds him in high esteem, cherishing their emotionally rich and happy memories together. One particularly heartbreak moment, described by Shon, is

when Indra, disguised as an old Brahmin, asks Karna for his divine armour and earrings as a donation—an incident that pierces the heart with its emotional intensity.

- One more important aspect of an affective narratology analysis is the source of the stimulus for emotional reactions. There are a great many possibilities, and different literary characters' inclinations in receiving stimuli from different sources can often contribute to establishing a basis for understanding of the specific figure.

Observing the development of the character of Karna, it becomes very obvious that his action, reactions and responses were guided by hurts, humiliation, love and respect he had received. If he would have been given enough attention by Guru Dron the story might be different. If Draupadi would not have humiliated him during her *swayamvar*, his opinion for Draupadi might be different. He respected Bhishma because he has allowed him to show his capabilities during tournament. It was he who had favoured his extraordinary skill of archery. And Arjun was his only enemy because he had killed his son Sudaman. Karna was ready to die for Duryodhana because it was he who had given him respect on the basis of his capability and overlooked his low birth. Karna told lie to Parshuram because Parshuram was giving training to brahmins only. In spite of many complexities, he respects Kunti and promises her that he will not kill any Pandavas except Arjun so anyhow she will have five Pandavas. Looking at Karna's married life, he was a respectful and caring husband. Even Vrushali was feeling proud of being his wife. She was grateful to God that she was his chosen wife. *Rashmirathi* by Dinakar poetically presents Karna's response to Krishna in following words,

है ऋणी कर्ण का रोम-रोम, जानते सत्य यह सूर्य-सोम  
तन मन धन दुर्योधन का है, यह जीवन दुर्योधन का है  
सुर पुर से भी मुख मोड़ूँगा, केशव! मैं उसे न छोड़ूँगा  
सम्राट बनेंगे धर्मराज, या पाएगा कुरुराज ताज,  
लड़ना भर मेरा काम रहा, दुर्योधन का संग्राम रहा,  
मुझको न कहीं कुछ पाना है, केवल ऋण मात्र चुकाना है.

Thus, entire novel seems like living entity.

2. Some emotions can be evoked instinctively. But the expression of most emotions can vary, and what evokes them can also be different. Emotions are not just tied to common biological conditions, but also to varying social conditions. Martha Nussbaum claims in *Upheavals of Thought* that "human beings experience emotions in ways that are shaped both by individual history and by social norms" (Nussbaum 2001, 140). (Anderson)

Karna's reactions and actions can be better understood when viewed in the context of his life history. Born with divine armor and earrings, Karna took great pride in his appearance. His childhood in Champanagari, filled with the love, care, and attention of his adoptive parents, Adhirath and Radha, helped shape his self-image as someone exceptional. From a young age, Karna demonstrated his extraordinary strength, such as when he trapped a panther, yet his abilities went unrecognized by Dronacharya, who favoured Arjun. Despite his talents, Karna was denied entry into Dronacharya's gurukul due to his low birth. This rejection led to a deep sense of resentment, as he was continuously humiliated for his social status. When Karna was denied the opportunity to showcase his skills during a tournament because of his low birth, he readily accepted Duryodhana's offer to make him King of Anga. Karna believed this recognition was based on his abilities, he was not aware of Duryodhana's political motives at that time. However, Duryodhana's true intention was to use Karna as a counter to Arjun in the future war, he was fully aware that Karna's strength was crucial in defeating the Pandavas.

Additionally, Karna's inner turmoil was evident in his daily practice of meditating by the Ganga before sunrise. His thoughts were consumed by his true identity and the differences between himself and his brother, Shon. He questioned why he could not accept his low birth and why he felt an inexplicable connection to the Sun god. This preoccupation with his identity blinded him to Duryodhana's ulterior motives, fuelling his desire to prove himself superior.

Karna's struggles were deeply tied to societal norms, where low birth disqualified him from receiving education from esteemed teachers like Dronacharya, and the politics of the time, particularly Duryodhana's manipulative behaviour. His humiliation at Draupadi's *swayamvar*, where she rejected him solely due to his low birth, left a lasting wound. For Karna, being insulted by a woman was the ultimate humiliation, further deepening his bitterness. While Draupadi's rejection followed social conventions, Karna's anger was natural, given the years of discrimination he endured. Yet, during Draupadi's humiliation by the Kauravas after Yudhishtir lost her in the gambling game, Karna, despite his past grievances, expressed a willingness to protect her if she sought his help. However, Draupadi approached every king for assistance except Karna.

Thus, Karna's behaviour was shaped by a complex interplay of his personal history, the social norms of the time, and the deep emotional scars left by repeated rejection and humiliation.

.3. They [Palmer and Zunshine] argue that we understand narratives by understanding the minds of the characters and narrators, that is, their intentions and motivations" (Alber and Fludernik 2010,12).

There are number of instances where Karna's thinking process on various incidents or reflections are very well described which helps in understanding the character wholistically. He accepts where he was wrong on the introspections he did. Karna discusses philosophical dilemma with Ashwatthama. He confesses his wrong statements against Draupadi and he asked for forgiveness through Krishna. His love and devotion for his foster parents and brother is evident in his thoughts. His quest for his real identity, his loyalty towards Duryodhana, everything is described in his monologues. When Kunti came to meet him, his thoughts revealed his emotions for Kunti. He thinks,

This was the lady who flung my life's lotus in the muddy river of Ashwa in an attempt to turn it into mud. Lady-mother-magnificent mandir of auspiciousness.... holy place of reverence. what was the difference between the lady who stood before me and a lioness who devours her cub at birth?

Karna was feeling as if his heart is flamed by Kunti's darshan. His reply to Kunti's request of joining Pandavas is remarkable. Karna says,

What hypocrites you all are- your brave son who used Indra as a decoy to rob me of my flesh ear rings and skin armour, who sacrificed Sudaman and Shon; your daughter-in-law who spurned me by addressing me as a son of charioteer ... and you who thrust an innocent, helpless baby into the foaming waters of Ashwa river...even if all of you agree to accept me as brother, husband and son, you are nothing better than total eternal frauds. (594 Mrityunjay)

Karna's is a man of commitment. He was true to his self. He has to tell lie to Parshuram because he had to. Except this, Karna is a man of truth. He was completely aware why he was on the throne of Anga and what is his duty. He is loyal friend and loving husband, brother and son. All these qualities of his are depicted in the perspectives of Shon, Vrushali, Duryodhana, Radhama and Krishna.

4. In Affective narratology, analysis of both space and time elements are important to investigate. In addition, emotional subjects involved, both main and minor characters are also of prime importance.

The author's skilful use of time and space elements significantly enhances the depth and emotional impact of the narrative surrounding Karna. For example, on the morning of the dice game, Karna receives subtle indications from nature foretelling an impending misfortune. As he prepares to offer ardhya to the Sun God, the atmosphere around him mirrors his internal turbulence. Shon's wife, engaged in the ritualistic act of making rangoli, unintentionally spills the bowl of colour, leaving the rangoli incomplete, foreshadowing the disruptions ahead. This moment, coupled with the cloudy weather, heightens the tension, as Karna is unable to witness the sunrise over the Ganga, emphasizing a break between him and his divine protector.

As Karna embarks towards Ganga river, his mind is filled with memories of his humiliation at Draupadi's *swayamvar*, indicating how the past haunts the present. The author uses the cloudy skies and Karna's inability to fully offer his prayers to Sun God as symbolic something unusual to happen. Even the subtle cry of a grasshopper while he prepares for the dice game adds to the foreboding atmosphere, hinting at the inevitable downfall.

The author further uses the element of space when Krishna reveals Karna's true identity under the tree, and again when Kunti meets Karna beneath the Kadamb tree. These intimate settings, removed from the chaos of courtly life, offer moments of reflection and confrontation with truth, adding layers of poignancy to Karna's character arc.

The incident of Kunti floating her newborn, Karna, into the river is another powerful use of time and space. The surrounding gloomy weather, coupled with the presence of Dhatri, her attendant, intensifies the emotional weight of the scene. The natural elements serve to mirror Kunti's anguish, heightening the sense of loss and separation.

In the gambling scene, the setting of the royal court, with Draupadi's *Vastra Haran* unfolding before the elders, becomes a space that amplifies both the horror and injustice of the moment. The crowded assembly hall contrasts with Draupadi's isolation, underscored by the fact that she is *rajaswala* (menstruating), which adds another layer of humiliation and shame to the scene. The author skilfully uses the court setting to evoke an intuitive emotional response, transforming it into a symbol of moral decay.

Moreover, the conversations between Karna and Vrushali, particularly their relationship dynamics, highlight Karna as an ideal husband. The space of their shared domestic life contrasts with the chaos of the public sphere, showing a softer, more intimate side of Karna. These interactions present them as an ideal couple, embodying mutual respect and love, further deepening Karna's portrayal as a complex and multifaceted character.

Through the manipulation of time and space, the author weaves an intricate tapestry of emotions and events that build Karna into a larger-than-life figure. His actions and relationships are not only shaped by his thoughts but also by the physical and temporal settings in which they occur, making the narrative both impactful and emotionally resonant.

5. Elements of time in literary description are interesting for affective narratology, among other reasons because duration of emotions plays different roles in people's lives. Impulse control can vary considerably from person to person, maybe even from situation to situation. According to Keith Oatley, reactive emotions, moods, sentiments, and preferences can be of interest in describing peoples' emotional dispositions, also the dispositions of literary characters.

Karna's reaction to his revelation by Krishna and his reaction to the offer Krishna made is noteworthy. Right from the childhood he was questioning his identity and he was desperate to know about it but when he actually came to know about it he accepts what he lived with.

When Krishna reveals Karna's true identity, he feels each word dashed like a towering wave of emotion on the shores of his mind...pg570

Listening to him, I simply could not fathom why cruel Kala had planted mango tree of my life in thorny and rocky soil. I was utterly restless. Should I betray the Kauravas in their hour of crisis? Should I stab in the back of Duryodhana.. should I spurn Radhamata who had given more importance to my joys and sorrows than those of her own son and run to embrace of Kunti Devi? ...I am Radha's son. No I am not the son of the Sun God I am the son of a charioteer. Pg 571

Krishna tries to make Karna understand that he will be remembered by people for crore and crores of year that Karna has sided with unjust Kauravas and pushed the whole of *Aryavarta* into the abyss of war for just his selfish interest and his false ideals. Who in spite of being the son of Sun God chose to obscure himself in darkness. But Karna replied that he cannot leave his parents like he did.

That show his emotional disposition how he admires and respects his foster parents. Karna's meeting with Kunti also reveals his mood his reaction towards his biological mother and in spite of everything he embraced his mother one last time. In the noteworthy creation of Rabindranath Tagore, the dialogue between Karna and Kunti is poetically described,

*Karna. Mother, no.*

*I wish no greater title for my lot  
Than charioteer's son, Radha my mother.  
Let Pandavas still Pandavas remain,  
Kauravas be Kauravas. I envy none...  
...you plucked me out of my life. Should I now disown  
The chariot-driver's wife, my mother grown,  
For royal mother? Should I, in search of thrones,  
Break my vowed bonds with the Kaurava king?  
O foul dishonour!*

*The poem ends with,*

*He ends like a true warrior prince:  
Only leave me this blessing: may I never  
Once transgress from the hero's virtuous course  
Through lust for fame or rule or victory.  
("The Meeting of Karna and Kunti")[3]*

<https://www.verseville.org/chapter-6rabindranath-tagore.html>

6. Feelings do not exist just in pure forms, no one is characterized by one type of feelings. But the relationship between dissimilar feelings can be different.

Karna was deeply loyal to his relationship with Duryodhana. Although he was resolute in his decision not to approach Dronacharya to learn the Brahmastra due to the fear of humiliation, he ultimately went for the sake of his friend. As expected, he faced humiliation from Dronacharya and returned with a broken heart. Yet again, it was Duryodhana who urged him to seek knowledge from Parshuram, and Karna, out of loyalty, agreed. To acquire this invaluable knowledge of archery, he introduced himself as a Brahmin.

The entire episode of Karna and Parshuram showcases Karna as the epitome of a devoted disciple. He had no personal ambition, no selfish motive. He endured Parshuram's curse solely because his intent was pure — to help his friend win the battle. Karna, who would rather die than be dishonoured for his low birth, accepted the humiliation for the sake of his friendship and to uphold his promises. His unwavering loyalty speaks through his

actions. When urged to approach Dronacharya for education, Karna's words echoed his deep resolve and internal struggle. His said,

*Karna: for the sake of your affection, I am prepared to reject even the three worlds. but how can I go to the doorstep of Guru Dron and stand there as a beggar? Karna will embrace death but will not compromise with self-respect and his freedom. ...pg 520*

But then Duryodhana played with Karna's emotions,

*If you are upset by the thought of going to Dron, I wont press you. But remember, Raja of Anga Karna, Duryodhana is a wonderful friend but he can also be a bitter enemy. From today the Raja-of-Anga Karna will be only one of the respect worthy Rajas of Aryavarta, not a friend....*

Without giving thought to his personal respect and feeling Karna prefers friendship; *Wait, king I am ready to go. What I would not have done for myself under any condition I will do for you. I will go as a pupil at the door of the very same Dron who always sought to drown me in the ocean of his indifference. For your sake only.. pg 521*

I cannot conclude the paper without mentioning the death incident of Karna. The final chapter of the novel presents the events from Krishna's perspective. After Karna's charioteer died, King Shalya, Madri's brother, took over as his charioteer on the seventeenth day of the war. Karna's sons, Prasen and Vrishasena, both sacrificed their lives fighting for the Kauravas, yet Karna continued to battle with unwavering loyalty.

Karna fiercely confronted Yudhishthira, causing him to retreat to his tent in desperation. This led to a heated argument between Yudhishthira and Arjuna, which escalated to the point where Arjuna vowed, he would not return without killing Karna. Meanwhile, Bhima fulfilled his vow to Draupadi by killing Dushasana and drinking his blood.

As Karna fought on, his attachment to earthly desires and expectations crumbled. His illusions of friendship shattered, the distinction between high and low birth dissolved, and his ego was stripped away. Now, he fought not out of ambition or pride, but because it was his duty. Though Krishna admired Karna's selfless devotion, he still manipulated the battle, urging Arjuna to strike when Karna was helplessly trying to free his chariot from the mud.

Karna was killed when he was unarmed, and even in his final moments, Krishna referred to him as "*Sutaputra*," a reminder of his low birth. Yet, Karna smiled at the end, and, true to his generous nature, he donated his golden teeth to someone in need just before he died.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that, in *Mrityunjay*, Karna is portrayed as a deeply complex and emotionally driven character, whose life is shaped by his internal conflicts, societal rejection, and unwavering loyalty. Born with divine gifts but burdened by his low birth as a charioteer's son, Karna's pride in his abilities is constantly undermined by repeated humiliation, particularly from figures like Dronacharya and Draupadi. His longing for validation leads him to ally with Duryodhana, whose support offers Karna the recognition he craves, despite Duryodhana's manipulative nature. Throughout his journey, Karna struggles with his true identity, torn between his love for his adoptive family, his complicated bond with Kunti, and his desire for respect based on merit. His emotional struggles, rooted in pride, loyalty, and a sense of injustice, make him a tragic hero, whose silent suffering and quest for dignity evoke both admiration and empathy. *Mrityunjay* shows that our perception of nature and the world is deeply influenced by our emotions, guiding our decisions and actions. While logic helps us navigate complex ideas, it is the heart that truly understands love and empathy. This is especially true in understanding Karna's character, whose life, marked by suffering and honour, invites us to connect with him emotionally. Karna's story reveals that life is not about conflict or winning but about

empathy, understanding, and respect for the world and people around us. His journey teaches us to live with emotional sensitivity, appreciating every moment and relationship. Primary source:

1. Sawant Shivaji, Mrityunjay R R Seth & Co. Pvt Ltd. Ahmedabad, 2024
2. Translator, P Lal and Nandini Nopany, Mrityunjaya, The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 1989

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