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Title of Book: *Tara's Truce*

Author: Kavita Kane

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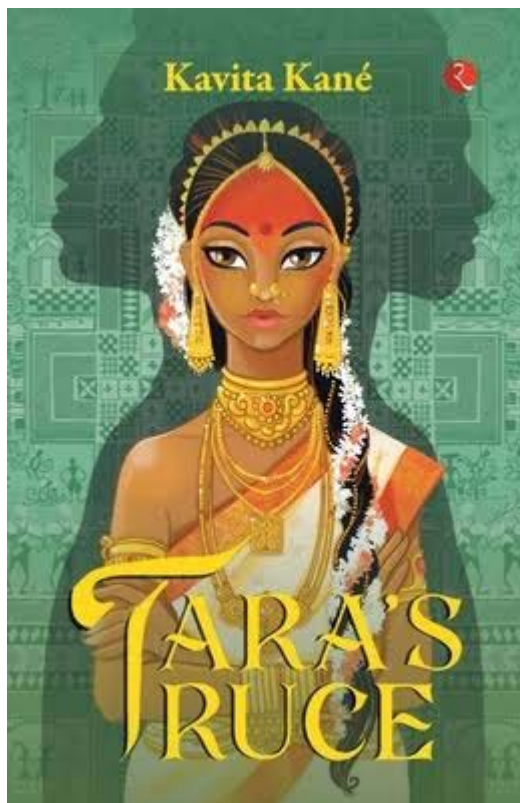
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“Tara’s Truce” by Kavita Kane can be best understood as a feminist desire to rewrite history through a lesser explored feminist perspective i.e of Tara’s. Tara is considered a *Sati* as per the Hindu mythology. There are five *Satis* commonly identified as per the Hindu mythology and Tara happens to be one of them. A *Sati* is a pious woman blessed with an abundance of virtues and noble deeds. She is the epitome of an ideal woman and is given a high status amongst one and all.

Kane is popular in the domain of mythological retellings facilitated through oft neglected women perspectives. In *Tara’s Truce*, her focus is on the less popular queen of the Kishkindha kingdom located within the Dandaka forests- Tara. Tara is a central character in the epic “Ramayana” but not as spoken of as other characters such as Sita or Surpanakaha/Meenakshi. It is worth mentioning that Kane had already explored Surpanakha’s story in another of her novels, *Lanka’s Princess*. Tara, on the other hand, is not a very familiar name nor has much attempts been made to explore her psyche. Kane endeavors to establish her identity beyond what is known- that she married her brother-in-law, Sugriv, after he killed Vali in a duel courtesy to the divine intervention of Rama to restore peace and order in her turbulent kingdom.

In her novel, Kane creates ample space to establish the character of Tara as a headstrong and independent woman who refuses to be coerced into doing anything even by the most authoritative figures. Tara is a free thinker in Kane’s imagination and voices her opinions fiercely in the presence of even the mightiest. She refuses to bow down before the wishes of anyone including her husband. She sets her own conditions before marrying Vali and is adamant on the fulfillment of those conditions. Vali- who is born a prince and to become a subsequent king- is to prove his worth before marrying her. She is willing to bear the pangs of loneliness and separation but unwilling to compromise on the worthiness of her future husband who she believes to have forsaken his ambition in favor of a passionate affair with herself. Only when Vali has proven his worth before Tara does she agree to marry him.

Their marriage, however, is a far cry from any kind of conjugal, domestic bliss as a strongly opinionated Tara often gets into heated arguments with her equally domineering husband, Vali. Tara never shies away from voicing her disapproval of Vali’s actions that she believes stems out of a strong sense of self-absorption coupled with excessive pride in the self. From loathing his

urges to prove his worth in duels by slaughtering his enemy in barbaric ways to staunchly condemning his act of taking his brother's wife as a hostage after the latter flees from the kingdom of Kishkindha, Tara reprimands and even opposes his husband whenever prompted.

In Kane's retelling of the epic *Ramayana*, Tara is depicted as a paradigm of righteousness who doesn't spare even the divine Rama when he kills Vali using deceit to make Sugriv the king of Kishkindha in exchange of his help to free Sita from the clutches of Ravana. She curses Rama that he too shall be killed when unsuspecting and vulnerable in a manner akin to her husband's in a moment of sheer helplessness and destabilizing grief. Later, on regaining her senses she expresses genuine regret over her cruel words that would later result in irreparable damage.

Tara marries Sugriv only to restore her volatile kingdom to peace and tranquility but never accepts him as her husband. She acts as his counsel in hours of distress but not out of a wife's loyalty towards her husband but rather a queen's duty towards her kingdom. She makes sure people understand her act of marrying Sugriv comes out of her responsibility towards her kingdom which transcends all personal differences and brotherly rivalry and not because of some oppressive patriarchal set up before which she haplessly surrendered. In doing so, she also secures the future of her son, Angad, by ensuring he remains the undisputed and unchallenged heir to the throne of Kishkindha.

Kane's Tara is bold, unapologetic and regal. She succumbs to none and lives life on her own terms. She juggles all the roles of a queen, a wife and a mother with an admirable precision. But above everything, she is to be seen as a dignified woman who doesn't allow circumstances- however dire- to get the best of herself.