
SHIKHANDI: A TRANSGENDER

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ABSTRACT

This section of the essay will describe, analyze, and comment on Shikhandi's ethical aspects as described in the great Mahabharata epic. The author firmly believes that ethics is a branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles and proper behavior, and he analyses Shikhandi's decisions through that lens. It relates to the history of Shikhandi and the series of life occurrences that always kept us on the edge of our seats. It is further significant to the present day scenario of LGBT community that they face in their everyday lives. Following that, a concluding statement is written.

Keywords: ethical, Mahabharata, moral principles, behavior, history, LGBT community.

MAIN CONTENT

Many characters and stories in the Mahabharata challenge conventional ideologies and demonstrate that the era was much more advanced and open in terms of thinking and mindset than it is now. Shikhandi, the warrior who killed Bhishma, is one such tale.

In the Hindu classic Mahabharata, Shikhandi is an ambiguous deity. Drupada, King of Panchala, gives birth to him as a female, later transforming into a boy. His brother is Draupadi, the feminine protagonist of the saga and the Pandavas' common wife. Bhishma despises Shikhandi, who is Amba's reincarnation. Shikhandi is Amba's reincarnated, whom Bhishma despises. Shikhandi fought for his in-laws, the Pandavas, in the Kurukshetra war and was accountable for Bhishma's death. Shikhandi, also known as Srikandi in Japanese wayang tradition, is a male who transforms into a female after birth. She is the Pandava brother Arjuna's second wife, after Draupadi.

Shikhandi was a Transgender Warrior Prince from the Kingdom of Southern Panchal in the Mahabharata legend who played a significant role in Bhishma's death. Shikhandi's story opens with his previous life as one of three Princesses named Amba from the Kingdom of Kashi. Amba had two younger sisters, Ambika and Ambalika, and all three were chaste.

Back then, the famous Hastinapur Kingdom in Central India had an eligible bachelor and newly crowned ruler named Vichitravirya (Son of King Shantanu) and an elder half-brother named Bhishma/Devavrata (Son of King Shantanu and Goddess Ganga). Bhishma decided to take the oath of celibacy and never rule the kingdom after his mother abandoned them and his father married and had another child. He gave everything up for his younger half-brother to enjoy. Bhishma's old father thus granted him the boon of death at will (*iccha mrutyu*). Bhishma traveled to Kashi to request the hand of the three princesses: Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika, for his half-brother's 'self-selection of bride' ceremony (*swayamwar/marriage*). Amba was in love with Shalva, King of Saubhala, who had lost to Bhishma and could not stop him from forcibly taking away Amba. Vichitravirya chose to marry only Ambika and Ambalika in Hastinapur. He turned down Amba because her heart belonged to someone else. At Shalva's request, Bhishma sent Amba to her with grandeur. Out of guilt for losing the battle against Bhishma, Shalva spurned her when she decided to return to the person she loved.

Amba returned to Bhishma, dejected and heartbroken, and asked him to marry her because she had lost both of her suitors. He was enraged because he had taken the oath of celibacy and

openly refused to comply. She spent a long time in penance, which pleased Lord Subrahmanyam, who graciously granted her a garland of lotuses, which would be the cause of Bhishma's death if worn by someone else. No one accepted it because they were afraid, so she left everything to go to the forest. She came to seek the assistance of Sage Parashurama, who tried but failed to assist her. She no longer desired marriage, a home, or happiness; all she desired was revenge on Bhishma for ruining her life.

According to C. Rajagopalachari's summary, she turned to repentance. She turned to repentance, according to C. Rajagopalachari's report. Lord Kartikeya gave her a garland of blue lotuses with the warning that anyone who wore it would be responsible for Bhishma's death. She chose the Panchal because they were a powerful empire with a well-equipped military. No one, however, was willing to stand up for her since they did not want to offend Bhishma. Amba placed the garland on King Drupada's gates in a fit of fury and fled in misery.

Shikhandi is still Amba-reborn in early Mahabharata accounts, but as a woman. Panchala is groomed to be a warrior and engage in the Kurukshetra War because she does not practise gender discrimination (this is the initial reason for Amba's suicides, as she hopes to be born into a cultural understanding that will allow her to defeat Bhishma). Shikhandi is a male character who was born a woman throughout the most of the novel. Shikhandini changes her sex to Shikhandi, although she is still a eunuch. Shikhandini discovered the garland of ever-blooming blue lotus flowers hanging on the royal gate when she was still a young woman, according to written in C. Rajagopalachari's Mahabharata. It was snatched by Shikhandini and she wore it around her neck. Drupada was afraid of becoming Bhishma's enemy when he saw his kid wearing the garland, and Shikhandini was expelled from the realm. She was transformed into Shikhandi, a man, after conducting penance in the wilderness.

Drupada longs for an heir and finds refuge in the woods in another version of the story. The first person he notices is Shikhandini, a child. A celestial voice commands Drupada to raise her like a man as he lifts her up. Shikhandini was adopted by Drupada as a son and married to a Dasharna lady princess. Hiranyavarna, her father, was displeased since her marriage was a woman. Shikhandini was terrified when the monarch dispatched investigators; she took to the woods (fleeing away), where she came face to face with a Yaksha who made personal contact with her. The Yaksha King sees the him as a girl and curses him to remain in that form till Shikhandi dies, thus maintaining the sex switch. This is when Amba, aka Shikandini,

transformed into Shikandi, a transgender warrior. In some versions of the story, Shikhandi becomes a eunuch; in others, he does not.

Amba is reborn as a male Shikhandi in several versions of the story, sometimes entire and sometimes as a eunuch. Shikhandi is a transgender male in another version, and Amba will recall every detail of her prior existence thanks to Shiva's blessing.

She eventually went to the Himalayas and performed severe penance to please Lord Shiva (a member of the Hindu Trinity), who granted her the boon of being the cause of Bhishma's death in her next life. Despite the fact that her prayers had been granted, she was uncertain that as a woman with no military training, she would be able to perform the assignment. He stated that Bhishma's death would be caused by her future incarnation. Amba committed suicide in order to do this, and was resurrected as Shikhandini, King Drupada's eunuch child. She could not take it any longer. She swore allegiance to the cause, built a pyre, and jumped into it.

Since she is both a woman and a man in the same body, Shikhandi, or rather the soul of Amba, seeks revenge on Bhishma during the Mahabharata conflict because she has the capacity to enter the battlefield. In her book *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick expands on the story's tone of gender fluidity. The author exposes patriarchal ideals and hypocrisy by depicting Shikhandi as a eunuch when she is transgender. In ancient India, differences in sexual preferences and gender identity and expression were never considered taboo. Society placed some limits as a result of unstable sexual attitudes, which eventually became taboos. Society placed some limits as a result of unstable sexual attitudes, which eventually became taboos. The collection's other stories are as thrilling. Gender identity transition is addressed by Kali, Mahadeva, Vishnu, Gopeshwar, Aravan, and Aruna. Surprisingly, women are objectified as seductresses in the narrative "Vishnu." It highlights the different ways patriarchal values manifest themselves in society. In the narrative "Chudala," Shikidhvaja, Chudala's spouse, always sought wisdom.

Chudala was a brilliant woman, but he refused to recognize her because of her gender. She was labeled as unreasonable because she was a woman. Chudala becomes a man by understanding this, as Kumbhaka becomes an ascetic. Shikidhvaja, unaware of this, becomes the recipient of Kumbhaka's wisdom. Shikidhvaja learned that gender did not limit anyone's wisdom when he met his bride. This exemplifies patriarchal bias, in which women are viewed as less capable than males and must present themselves as such in order to prove their competence. As a result,

“Chudala” challenges the idea of women as essentially reproducing machines or sexual objects. In the final chapter, “Madhata, whose mother was a man,” Yuvanasva, a guy, gives birth to a child, and the author poses a vital question at this point, “if a man uses medical science to bear a child and lactate, how would modern society treat him?”

Skip ahead to the battle of Kurukshetra, where Drupad's army fought alongside the Pandavas. Lord Krishna (Avatar of Lord Vishnu and Narrator of the Bhagwad Gita) deemed Shikhandi's presence on Arjun's Chariot appropriate. He was well aware that Shikhandi would be responsible for Bhishma's death. Shikhandi stood in front of Arjun as he rode the Chariot. Bhishma recognized Shikhandi when he saw him, and he also recognized Shikhandi as a female. Bhishma lowered his weapon out of chivalry because he could not attack Shikhandini/Shikhandi. Arjun fired an arrow at that precise moment, and Bhishma saw his demise in Shikhandi's eyes. Bhishma had foreseen his demise and finally chose to let go of his life in accordance with his boon. With the final blow, Bhishma lay on an arrow-riddled deathbed. This is how Shikhandi played a role in the death of the great Bhishma. As a result, a great warrior was defeated, and this victory was the most significant step toward the Pandavas' victory in the Battle of Kurukshetra. This is Shikhandi's story.

CONCLUSION

To put it in a nutshell, Shikhandi challenges the stereotype that the third gender is the "other." The stories' diversity shows ancient India's stance on homosexuality. These legends do not condemn any sexualities, intimacies, or gender identities, illustrating the ancient Indian society's tolerance. Not just in Indian mythology but also in Khajuraho sculpture and other temple engravings, homoerotic gestures are highlighted. Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, according to Pramod K. Nayar, may be found in numerous of these stories, where roles are accessible to "negotiation and adjustment," in contrast to the modern world. *Mythology* is a massive repository that allows researchers to go down a variety of pathways. After an earnest attempt to locate the much-celebrated queer existence in ancient Indian mythology, Shikhandi becomes a reference in India's quest for public acceptance of the "LGBT population".

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