



**GENDERED HEROISMS: A STUDY OF SELECT STORIES FROM THE *AMAR CHITRA KATHA***

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Abstract

Recent theoretical developments in literary criticism have not only made us question and revisit the category of children's literature, but also shed a new look at its purported aims and effects. Therefore, many texts, considered 'children's literature' have now been seen simply as literature that is read not just by children but also by many adults.

Anant Pai's *Amar Chitra Katha* is one such example of Indian children's literature whose readership and appeal has never been limited to children. It is therefore fruitful to view *Amar Chitra Katha* books as texts constituted by, and, emanating certain political ideologies. Ideologically located within the rise of a national consciousness in post- independence India, Pai's graphic narratives negotiate with the various models of heroism accessed through primarily mythology and history. As children's literature, they perhaps have a pedagogical and moral value and contribute to the socialisation of the child- reader. As literary and cultural texts, available to a larger demographic, they are also implicated in larger social and ideological debates central to the shaping of the new nation.

The paper aims to analyse a few female-centred stories in the *Amar Chitra Katha* series as reflective of, and negotiating with the dominant male-centric discourses of heroism circulating in the space of Indian popular culture. The chief architects of this discourse were the graphic narratives published as *Amar Chitra Katha*. Within this larger context, the paper views the representation of female characters in the *Brave Women of India* series. In their negotiation with conventional and patriarchal model of male heroism, they represent a moment of hegemonic struggle and intervention in the politically charged climate of the 1970s.

**Keywords:** Amar Chitra Katha, Brave Women of India, Gender, Heroism, Violence, Rani of Jhansi, Popular Culture

