

## Kavita Kane and Her Feminist Retelling

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**Abstract:** The Hindu mythology has rich history, enigmatic characters resounding stories and a surprising innate association with modern science. There are cyclic periods of time that keep on repeating themselves after a certain interval. The great epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana are the earliest and being the longest known epic in human history which depicted the Indian culture. Hindu mythology gives a lot importance to the role of women equal to that of men. But this importance is limited to few selected women in mythology and the others are left unnoticed. This attitude of the myths being created and criticised by men has compelled the modern women writers to retell the myths from their perspective. Kavita Kane has tried to decode this gender consciousness through her novels. Menaka, Surpanakha, Urmila, the minor but important characters in the epics who were marginalized but Kane pulled them to the centre and expressed their pains, griefs, desires and rights.

**Keywords:** Mythology, identity crises, social exclusion, female struggle, Unheard voices, marginalized characters.

**Introduction** - Kavita Kane, an Indian journalist turned author has authored books related to Indian mythology and legends. She is a prominent figure in the contemporary Indian neo-mythological writings. Kavita is famous for her portrayal of female protagonist who are conventionally and systematically overlooked and cornered by male authors and society at large as well. She picked up various lesser-known female characters from ancient Indian texts, particularly from epics and through her literary genius and arresting narrative techniques gave them a prominent role. Her works fall in the category of postmodern feminism and "she is considered a revolutionary force in Indian writing because she has brought in feminism where it is most needed-mythology. Her famous lesser-known female protagonists include Urmila from Sita's Sister, Ahalya from Ahalya's Awakening, Menaka from Menaka's Choice, Uruvi from Karna's Wife, Satyavati from The Fisher Queen's Dynasty, and Surpanakha from Lanka's Princess. Through these characters Kane proposes to capsize the conventional trope of "ideal woman" into a "new woman", who is fiercer and bolder toward her desires and requirements. She has been successfully able to give voice to these unheard characters and forced readers to ruminate about these characters in a new light.

Kane's prose is a symphony, seamlessly blending traditional Sanskrit with contemporary Indian vernacular. This linguistic alchemy evokes the essence of ancient India while remaining accessible to modern readers. Her vivid descriptions transport us to mythical landscapes, immersing us in the sights, sounds, and emotions of her characters'

world. Yet, within this historical tapestry, Kane courageously weaves feminist threads. She challenges patriarchal structures and societal norms, giving voice to the silenced and empowering women to reclaim their narratives.

Beyond retellings, Kane's versatile voice shines in short stories and essays. She tackles contemporary themes with the same evocative language and insightful perspective, showcasing her mastery of storytelling across genres. Through it all, Kane's work resonates with a profound emotional connection. Her characters' struggles and triumphs transcend time and culture, reminding us of the universality of human experience. In essence, Kavita Kane is more than a mythologist; she is a literary architect, reconstructing forgotten narratives, amplifying silenced voices, and reminding us that even the grandest epics hold untold stories waiting to be heard.

Kavita Kane's work isn't just about revisiting myths; it's about reclaiming them. It's about understanding the past through the eyes of those often ignored, and finding echoes of their struggles in our own lives. By giving voice to the unheard, Kane forces us to confront uncomfortable truths, re-evaluate the narratives we hold dear, and ultimately, rediscover the human spirit in its most raw, resilient form. As you delve into her world, prepare to have your understanding of myth, history, and even yourself, irrevocably transformed. Prominent Indian writer Kavita Kane has established a distinct style in the field of mythological fiction. Her books have enthralled readers with their moving stories and vivid language, rewriting classic tales from the viewpoint of marginalised characters. This

paper explores Kane's writing style, examining its essential components and how they relate to her literary achievements.

**Deconstructing the grand narrative-** Kavita Kane's most striking feature is her writing style and her focus on the traditional mythological narratives. Instead of focusing on the heroic deeds of the central figures she throws lights on the unheard and silenced voices- the wives, sister and other forgotten heroes who exist in this grand epic but have no spotlight on them. Her debut novel- *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen*, gives voice to Uruvi, Karna's loyal yet often overlooked wife. It retells the story of Mahabharata; the religious Hindu epic from the perspective of the character Uruvi in relation to Karna as an enigmatic character who is the King of Anga and husband to Uruvi and Vrushali. Myths are criticized for the bias presentation of female characters. The narration of the Mahabharata which has the gigantic episodes of acts and events are presented with experimental exercises and expressions with multi narration by Kane. Analysing from different angles, multiple voices and questioning and re-acting them are the modern trend of writing. Uruvi challenges social patriarchal norms by making her own decisions and questioning her conscience. She questions with logic and argues for the possible, finding her comfort zone. The novel offers a fresh perspective on Mahabharata.

**Focusing on feminist narratives-** Kane's retelling of myths is often associated with feministic perspective. She challenges patriarchal structures and societal norms within the framework of ancient narratives. The female characters of her tale aren't damsels in distress, but human beings who face society expectations, search for agency and create their own destiny. Kane explores and amplifies the voices of women from mythology, shedding light on their experiences, struggles, and strengths. By diving into the untold stories and perspectives of female characters, Kane contributes to a feminist narrative within the context of Indian mythology. Characters like Uruvi (Karna's wife), Urmila (Sita's sister), and Surpanakha (Ravana's sister) take centre stage, allowing readers to see the epic stories through their eyes and understand their often-overlooked perspectives. Kane focuses on these characters to bring out their pains and sufferings and retell the story from their point of view, which gives a fresh perspective to the epics. Her work is not only a celebration of women's voices but also a call for empathy and understanding for these women's. Kane's female characters provide a cathartic voice to a community victimized by patriarchal traditions. By distancing themselves from patriarchal anxieties and gender ideologies, Kane's women characters puncture the idolized images of women. From Uruvi to Ahalya, all of Kane's protagonists are the anti-thesis of traditional gender roles. For example, in Ahalya's Awakening, Ahalya is an extraordinary character when viewed from the eyes of Kane. In Ramayana, Ahalya was less glorified and not taken into

consideration. But in this novel, Kane focuses more upon the problems that Ahalya had to face in her life in order to attain her passion and bring out her identity. Kane by giving importance to her female characters, emphasis on the main struggle faced by the women in society.

**Power of emotional resonance-** Kavita Kane's experiences are rich and stimulating, but they are not just about sight and sounds. She infuses them with emotions making one feel the emotion of betrayal, the intense and passionate love and the cold dreads of loss. Her canvas is ancient India, but her emotions are timeless. "Grief demands answers, but one doesn't always get them. Let me hate you as passionately as I loved you". This powerful quote from Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister* encapsulates Urmila's complex emotions and the intense grief she experiences after lord Rama's exile. She has been left behind while her husband Lakshmana accompanies Rama and Sita into exile. This sudden separation and the lack of explanation for their forced departure leave Urmila in a state of profound grief. She grapples with unanswered questions: Why did this happen? What could they have done differently? The absence of answers fuels her pain and frustration. Kane with this quote also bring out the fierce side of Urmila in the story which was hidden. The line can also be interpreted as a feminist critique of traditional narratives that prioritize the male hero's journey over the experiences of women left behind. Urmila's anger gives voice to the often-silenced pain of women who are forced to sacrifice their own desires for the sake of duty and societal expectations.

**Beyond the epic-** Kane's feminist approach goes beyond the retelling of traditional tales. Her style is not limited to the realm of epic mythology. Her stories explore contemporary themes with the same insightful perspective, highlighting the ongoing struggles for gender equality and women's empowerment. By weaving together ancient narratives and modern realities, Kane demonstrates the enduring relevance of feminist themes and inspires readers to engage in critical reflection on their own societal contexts. Kane's work unveils the richness and complexity of feminist thought. By exploring different perspectives and experiences, she creates a multifaceted tapestry that reflects the diverse realities of women in her stories and beyond. Her stories are beyond the epics as she delves into the stories of wives, sisters and other female characters who are marginalised or pushed to sidelines within the broader narrative of the significant epics. These characters are not given central attention or prominence instead they are treated less important. Kane's focus is not on epic clashes and conquests, but on the inner lives of her characters. She explores their emotional complexities, moral dilemmas, and personal growth, offering a more intimate and relatable perspective on myth.

**Conclusion-** Kavita Kane's novels offer a fresh and compelling perspective on familiar myths and historical

events, giving voice to women who have been overlooked in traditional narratives. Her works encourage readers to reconsider established viewpoints and appreciate the often-unsung heroines who have contributed to the rich tapestry of human stories. An analysis of Kavita Kane's selected female characters suggests that though all of them lived in a male dominated society, these females never cater completely to the men's desires. Kavita Kane's writing style is a potent blend of historical context, feminist insight, and evocative language. By deconstructing traditional narratives, giving voice to marginalized characters, and weaving rich emotional tapestry, she has reimagined mythology for a modern audience. Her work has not only gained critical acclaim but also sparked conversations about gender, identity, and the enduring power of storytelling. Kavita Kane has given voice to the voiceless bringing out the hidden characters from the epic who also have a story to tell from

their own perspective.

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