

## An Examination of Subverted Hegemonic Paradigms in the Novels of Kavita Kané

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### Abstract

This paper presents a feminist reinterpretation of mythology, focusing on lesser-known female characters and retelling their stories from a gynocentric perspective. It delves into Kavita Kané's subversion of traditional and hegemonic paradigms within her works. The paper focuses on Kané's "Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen," in which Kané examines Uruvi, a typically minor character in the Mahabharata, and grants her a central role. Through Uruvi's perspective, Kané challenges dominant narratives surrounding heroism and caste discrimination. The paper explores Uruvi's emotional complexities, struggles, and agency, showcasing her strength and resilience within a patriarchal society. It also highlights how Kané's approach mirrors the possibilities of women-centric portrayals through a revisionist perspective, ultimately subverting hegemonic paradigms prevalent in mythologies. By analyzing Kané's treatment of characters relegated to minor roles or negative stereotypes in traditional narratives, the researcher aims to understand how Kané challenges and redefines established norms, offering a fresh perspective on mythological storytelling.

**Keywords:** Feminism, patriarchy, myth retellings, subversions, revolt, and realize

## Introduction

Myths are timeless reflections of fundamental human concerns that may be found in any community; indeed, they might be regarded as an integral part of culture itself. Humans have told stories since the dawn of time in order to place human life amid strange and unfathomable powers that surround them and to find meaning and purpose therein. When these tales get ingrained in folklore, they are referred to as myths. Neanderthal gravesites containing diverse items that have been intentionally placed to convey a belief in a realm beyond death are among the earliest evidence of mythical thinking (Armstrong, 2005). Myths are expressed in various ways as culture evolves, from religious ceremonies to visual art, literary works, and therapeutic symbols.

Myths, folklore, folktales, and stories have profoundly influenced people worldwide. These stories are frequently used to instill morals and goodness in youngsters and humanity as a whole. Unlike histories, which are symbolic narratives, myths are entertaining and imaginative. They deal with spiritual truths rather than facts. They serve as the underpinnings of belief, illustrating how things came to be and who was engaged in the process. However, because they were written mainly or imagined by men, these stories have a strong androcentric bent. These male writers scarcely interpreted gyno-centric feelings and aspirations. Many writers have reinvented the narrative from a female perspective in recent years to emphasize the need for a gender-inclusive perspective on various factors that affect society. It is the societal clout of myths that motivates many writers to use them to address a variety of pressing and sensitive issues. The myths, which are largely androcentric, were created to school women about ideal womanhood, such as chastity, subservience, and self-sacrifice, among other things. Thanks to the feminism waves that ebbed and went through the literary scenes, leaving imprints in a variety of literary genres. Chanda-Vaz says that "traditionally, Indian mythology has promoted the patriarchy by confining women along with the Shudras. Now the circumstances are changing. The subaltern continues to employ the techniques that justified their subjugation to empower themselves."

Karen Horney (1885-1952), a Neo-Freudian psychologist who studied Feminine Brain research, believes male stories cannot reflect female psychological studies or female sex if

women do not train them. Understanding the female psyche and regaining feminine memories requires a female-driven academic program. Writing is interpretive. Western authors from Mary Wollstonecraft to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have addressed women's challenges. Women were exposed to male-centric mentalities through both print and inappropriate behavior. India produces Krupabai. Sathianadhan, Tarabai Shinde, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Kavita Kané demanded freedom.

### **Objectives of the research**

The researcher aims to determine the objectives of a study examining Kavita Kané's novels and their subverted hegemonic paradigms. The researcher may examine how Kané portrays characters that are typically relegated to minor roles or negative stereotypes in traditional narratives. By analyzing the perspectives, agency, and complexities given to these characters, the researcher can assess how Kané challenges and subverts hegemonic paradigms.

The researcher can investigate how Kané provides alternative perspectives to established narratives. This involves analyzing the narrative choices, plot developments, and character arcs that deviate from traditional representations of the genre. By doing so, the researcher can highlight how Kané disrupts dominant paradigms and offers fresh interpretations of them. Kané's novels are known for their feminist approach, so a researcher may focus on how she challenges traditional gender norms and expectations. This can involve analyzing the characters' relationships, their agency, and the exploration of women's desires and struggles within patriarchal societies. The researcher may examine how Kané's feminist lens informs her subversion of hegemonic paradigms.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher may investigate the reception and impact of Kané's novels on readers. This can involve conducting surveys, interviews, or analyzing reader responses and reviews. By examining how readers engage with and interpret the subverted paradigms presented in Kané's works, the researcher can gain insight into the transformative potential of her narratives.

The researcher can place Kané's novels within the broader context of Indian mythology, history, and literature. This involves exploring the dominant narratives and paradigms prevalent in these contexts and analyzing how Kané's works challenge and subvert them. By situating Kané's novels within the cultural and literary landscape, the researcher can shed light on the significance of her subversive approach. Overall, the objectives for a researcher studying Kavita Kané's novels would be to analyze the subverted hegemonic paradigms, examine alternative perspectives, explore feminist themes, assess the impact on readers, and contextualize the works within the broader cultural and literary frameworks. Therefore, the research questions are as follows

- 1) How has the writer analyzed and portrayed the marginalized characters?
- 2) How can the reader Explore alternative perspectives?

### **Limitations of the study**

The study might have a limited sample size, focusing only on a few novels by Kavita Kané or a specific subset of her works. It is essential to consider whether the findings can be generalized to the broader body of Kané's novels or other authors with similar themes. Literary analysis often involves subjective interpretation, and different scholars may interpret the exact text in varying ways. The study might be limited by the researcher's personal biases or subjective interpretations, which could impact the validity and reliability of the findings. Without a control group or comparison with other authors or works, it may be challenging to determine whether the subversion of hegemonic paradigms is unique to Kavita Kané's novels or a common feature in the genre. The absence of a control group limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions.

### **The Hypothesis of the Study**

Kavita Kané deconstructs and reimagines traditional portrayals of female characters in Indian mythology, thereby challenging and subverting hegemonic representations of these characters. Kavita Kané's narratives depict marginalized voices and provide a platform for silenced or overlooked characters, thereby disrupting dominant narratives and challenging the established hegemonic order.

## Women in Kané's Novels

Kavita Kané's protagonists are women from mythology who are less well-known. She has a compelling cause for doing so. The true significance of such unseen, unnoticed ladies, whom we come across all the time but hardly acknowledge, is the important question addressed here. They are usually ignored for a simple reason: they are not the main character. However, when they are cast as heroines, the limelight is shone onto them. They can communicate verbally and participate in discussions. They are no longer just a footnote in the narrative; they are vocal, have a perspective, and have the ability to effect change. When Rama, Sita, and Lakshman leave the castle for the vanavasa, no one knows what happened. In 'Sita's Sister,' Urmila, an isolated refugee, tells the story. They are neglected. However, without them, the plot would disintegrate. They are the irregular impetuses: without Menaka, Vishwamitra, Shakuntala, Dushyant, and subsequently Lord Bharat and the Kurus, the story could not have unfolded. As Kané expresses in "Why I Expound on the 'Minor' Women Characters from the Sagas," Satyavati cultivates and gathers family discord, which explodes years later into a terrible war. Kané also emphasizes that Urmila, Menaka, Surpanakha, and Satyavati all enhance the leads. Surpanakha and Urmila oppose Sita. What is Bhishma without Satyavati? She transforms Devavrat into Bhishma.

Characters in the narrative surround the protagonist, just as they do in real life, and reveal a great deal about the protagonist's nature. Until Satyavati appears in the Mahabharata, everything is fine. She is the one who breathes life into the plot. Satyavati's persona reveals a lot about Devavrat/Bhishma, the hero of the first half of the epic. Her existence brings about Bhishma. Kané

"I strive to make things function the other way around. I can essentially fill them out through the main characters by making a lesser character, my protagonist. *Urmila*, *Sita's sister*, *Janaka's daughter*, and *Lakhsman's wife*. However, she is also Vyas' unwed mother, the queen mother of her two sons and *Hastinapur's* successors, and the Pandavas' and Kauravas' great-grandmother (Kané, "Why I Write about the 'Minor' Women Characters from the Epics")."

Frequently, these underappreciated characters serve as symbolic figures who aid in the progression of the plot. These underappreciated individuals often serve as symbolic figures who contribute to the plot's development. Surpanakha is a prime example of this. The last part's main antagonist is also the catalyst for Ravan and Slam's fight. Menaka, the seductress, appears and disappears like a miasma yet leaves a mark.

If it had not been for Satyavati, who would have irreparably changed the course of not just his own life but also the lives of Hastinapur and the royal Kurus, Bhishma would not have accepted his dreadful oath of celibacy or relinquished his kingdom. In a flurry of dramatic action, she goes from fisherwoman to queen. She develops into a crafty wife and ambitious mother after seemingly appearing out of nowhere and constructing her destiny and royal line with her genes. Minor characters can appear fervent, partisan, interested, or even hostile - all with just the perfect amount of realism that can be used and enhanced as the plot progresses. Satyavati contributes to the narrative's mood and tone, even as a minor character who survives for a considerable portion of the epic, with aspirations and authority, disdain, and cunning, which prove to be the key elements in the second half.

### **The portrayal of marginalized women in her mythological novels**

Any discussion of these legendary women's role in the singular sagas leads to a discussion of folklore and how each character joins the story in their unique way, leaving a lasting impression. In terms of "footage," they may be tiny, yet they are crucial. Indian Rig Vedic women were highly regarded in public, and their living conditions were excellent. They were given the chance to achieve high academic and spiritual standards.

Romasha, Lopamudra, Visvavara, Gargi, Maitreyi, Ghosha, and Aditi were Brahnavadinis who found wisdom in the Old Veda. Tragically, these norms have diminished in India due to outside influences, since trespassers who represented India viewed women objects of sexual excitement and exploitation and the wealth of combat as an award. It prevailed under Muslim and English rule. "If the Indian sagas - Ramayana and Mahabharata - had not been reconsidered and retold on different occasions, they could never have existed today," said Kavita Kané, at 'A Tryst with the Ramayana', organized by The New Indian Express gathering in

Chennai (Express News Administration). From Mohan Roy through Mahatma Gandhi, social reformers and authors fought Sati, widow maltreatment, widow marriage boycotts, and foregoing property liberties and training for women after autonomy. Power structures and man-woman relationships were altered.

Many retellings and reinterpretations of Indian epics exist. Each Indian language has an interesting adaptation of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These works idealize mythology. The stories depicted women as upholders of manly honor, yet their pledges and penances were ignored. These sagas feature fascinating female characters who significantly influence the action. Kunti, Draupadi, Gandhari, Amba, Surpanakha, and others fought for their rights, no matter what. Kavita Kané, as a modern Indian women's essayist, understands and expresses the deepest nature of oppressed women with her female sensibility and mind. Her female characters are passionate about thoughts, information, and feelings, reflecting a feminist perspective.

*Karna's Wife and Others*, Kavita Kané's most famous novel, follows Uruvi's transformation into an independent woman. Uruvi fights. She knows that marrying Karna, a maverick due to his low social status, will destroy her life forever, but she will do it anyway. After marrying Karna, Uruvi's life changed despite being a beautiful princess who could paint and ride horses. Uruvi's search for her family, her protection of Karna during his difficult times, her attempts to persuade him to follow dharma, and her departure to Pukeya after learning of Karna's role in Draupadi's disrobing echo current women's experiences and reveal Indian culture's deeply ingrained biases against women, in *Sita's Sister*, Kavita Kané's character, Urmila, questions outdated, man-driven power. Sita's name was never used for Ruler Janak's real daughter, Urmila. "In any case, Sita had never seen Urmila furious at the large number of favors provided for her when she denied them (*Sita's Sister*, 23)." Urmila by Kavita Kané glorifies "boundless sisterhood" and debunks negative female relationships.

Urmila helped the family adjust to Ruler Dasharath's death and Rama's exile, and she discovered Mantara as Smash's exile's real culprit. When Master Kashyap tries to calm Urmila's questions regarding Rama's exile and Bharata's repentance, she yells about dharma and a man's duties to his women she questioned, "why do the queens usually have to bear the brunt of the



male members' decisions?" When Ram made the decision to go to the wilderness, Sita followed her dharma as a wife and accompanied him. As an ideal brother, Lakshman also joined him in the jungle. Bharat then plans to give up his worldly life and live as an ascetic for the next fourteen years.

“Has anyone considered their mother's tears and grief? Has anyone among them considered the women who are forced to endure these pains in silence? ... Why did your brothers marry if you couldn't follow the vows you made to your wives? You may be the best of the princes, the perfect sons, the ideal brothers, and possibly even the ideal monarchs, but you will never be the good husband (Sita's Sister, 223).”

The third novel of Kavita Kané is *Menaka's Choice*. This novel offers a comprehensive and nuanced portrayal of the lives, limitations, motivations, desires, and wishes of the magnificent nymphs. Menaka, the underappreciated legendary apsara in heaven sent to thwart Sage Vishwamitra's spiritual ascension, has been given a true story by Kavita Kané. Menaka emerges as a lady with great understanding and inborn aptitude, not just a strange soul to be redirected and pulverized or for sensual pleasure

*Menaka's Choice* is a poignant story about Menaka and Vishwamitra, as well as a suppressed and enslaved woman fighting for her independence in a world dominated by men. "Let's assume it, Master," yelled one analyst. "You incapacitated me of my ability for purposeful decision and choice" (47); "How frequently are we to be your weapons of battle, to enjoy those wild desires?"(46); "How often are we to be your weapons of war, to pamper those insane ambitions!" (249). Menaka's criticisms of the social order and male dominance are directed at their monarch, Indra. A powerful rishi seduces her and receives gifts for life, and she realizes that the only way out of poverty and the lecherous gazes of her neighbors is to become a queen. So, what if her father refused to recognize her as a princess? When King Shantanu, seeking solace through his womanizing, falls hard for her, her fisherman father demands that the noble and heroic heir, Prince Devavrata, surrender all claim to the throne and only the offspring born out of his aged father, Shantanu and the youthful Satyawati, rule over Hastinapur. He is also required to swear the oath of celibacy.



## **Exploration of alternative perspectives of the author through fictitious characters in her novels**

Satyavati has to deal with persistent animosity from the family, nobles, servants, and just about everyone at the palace who loathe her for stealing Devavrata's privileges, now known as Bhishma. The blistering hostility directed at the new queen by the general public is enough to faze anyone, but not the ambitious woman who never loses her sangfroid. Even when the heirs to the throne, Chitrangad and Virya, are born, the populace is only marginally placated by her subtly indicating that they are under the loving care of their much older stepbrother.

In the character of Surpanaka in her book *Lanka's Princess*, the author deciphers another underappreciated figure, Surpanakha, who is widely regarded as the demon Ravana's shameless, horrible, vicious, and untamed sister in the epic Ramayana. Surpanakha, which means "nail-hard woman," is the daughter of Kaikesi and Vishravas and was born as Meenakshi. This work unfolds events that contribute to the development of Meenakshi's character and her transformation into Surpanaka. Meenakshi is irritated and indignant by life in Lanka under her brother Ravana's leadership, as well as the people's way of life. She deliberates

“All of these people have nasty manners and are louts. What a waste of evenings, what a waste of uninteresting, uninteresting days they all have –raucous card-playing, gluttony, inebriation, and endless discussion about the same thing, over and over again. Men talk about battle, victory, and prosperity, while women appear to enjoy the advantages of each. Such pointless activities and conversations that continually revolve around the same topics... (*Lanka's Princess* 8).”

Meenakshi gives the world something a woman "may hate in the entirety of its undiluted immaculateness" when her family kills Vidyujiva, her only love (*Lanka's Princess* 170). *Lanka's Princess* by Kavita Kané explains how common conditions grow from the perspective of a despised woman. She is condemned for taking advantage of Sita and Ravana's circumstances, which caused a horrific dispute and her loved ones' lack of support. Kavita Kané discovers a great deal about love, loss, and removal before rising to struggle again.

*The Fisher Sovereign's Tradition* by Kavita Kané dissects parenthood and the trope of the ever-nurturing mother. Sage Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata*, is the son of Satyavati. Satyavati, the neglected daughter of a ruler, is called Matsyagandha, the fish-smelling girl because she was raised in a fisherman's nuclear family. She turns fragrant, like Yojanagandha or Gandhavati, related to sage Parashar. "For what reason was I denied my right? I was conceived a princess. Ruler's daughter. As far as I know, my brother is Matsya's ruler" (*The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* 31). Kavita Kané brilliantly examines her resolve to use desire as a weapon to get what she was denied, her cold and deadpan choices to make her children rulers and her final acknowledgment.

While Satyavati's decision-making abilities, foresight, and ability to put her political skills into action are praised in the epic, her dubious methods for achieving her goals, as well as her seemingly weakened aspirations, are condemned. Kavita Kané gives a comprehensive look at the astonishing authority of the Kuru family, Satyavati, and her vital role in creating the future of the Kuru clan, which is not recorded visibly. The objective of *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* is to remind modern readers that virtue and chastity are terms manufactured by patriarchy to suit its purposes. It makes us wonder why it is simply a terrible misdemeanor for males to consider preserving their own code of ethics, but it is a crime, or even a sin, for women to pursue autonomy in thought and action. It makes us wonder why a child is expected to carry on his or her father's legacy while ignoring his or her mother's contributions. *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* is worth reading not just because it explains the reasons for Indian mythology's most powerful lady, but also because it demonstrates how she was more sinned against than she was sinning. It's worth reading because best-selling novelist Kavita Kané, who made a name for herself with the gripping *Karna's Wife* in 2013, has once again given prestige to a female character, helping the reader connect with someone who has been regarded as a footnote. It is worth reading since the queen mother's monologues and dialogues illustrate the horns of a dilemma that the two most powerful individuals rarely find or identify!

Readers witness how the author portrays the life, thoughts, and emotions of a woman in Ahalya's Awakening, which discusses a woman about whom we find no exclusive description in the Ramayana, except for the event where Rama confirms Ahalya's independence. However,

Ahalya has a lot more to say about herself, and Kavita Kané expertly frames this character in the appropriate light. Ahalya has long been associated with infidelity as the woman who betrayed her wise husband, Gautam Rishi. Rama, on his route to exile, liberated her from his curse, which had transformed her into a rock. That is all there is to know about her. Ahalya is the most gorgeous, graceful lady Kané has ever seen, and she has always had an intellectual side to her. She is terrified and anxious when she is young and forced to take refuge in Gautam Rishi's Ashram. She does, however, have some unanswered questions. Wisdom comes naturally to her, and she carries it with her honesty. Ahalya's shortcomings are captured as naturally as her innocence by Kavita Kané. Ahalya embraces the familiarity when she realizes it is Indra who is with her. Ahalya accepts being cursed and invisible to everyone, but she refuses to subordinate her will to that state. Even though she was married to Gautam and had three lovely children, she understood the reasons for her feelings of betrayal and loneliness. Ahalya is a person who never loses herself. Her ability to persevere in the face of adversity defines who she is. Through Ahalya's storytelling, the author captivates us. She feels guilty, yet she is wise in choosing to rise above it and find her life's purpose. It was a difficult decision, but in the end, she was free from the validation curse.

On the other hand, Kavita Kané's sketch of Satyavati oddly suits her persona. There is no storyline for Satyavati's past in the *Mahabharata*, but if you read her character, you'll meet the young, ferocious, bitter Kali with a foul odor, hence her moniker, Matasyagandha. The woman who can't love but preserves her country and lineage with a compassion she doesn't realize she has. Her match should have been Bhishma, but she chooses Shantanu instead. She becomes a fighter and an opportunist as a result of those long, painful years. Satyavati, an abandoned child of royal lineage, seeks vengeance in a society that mocks her own existence. Her characters have so many layers that you keep peeling them away, and a new Satyavati emerges. She is wrong in some ways, but the way she handles her subjects' hate-mongering is admirable. She is not emotional, and she understands just where to strike the chords in a crisis. Satyavati's struggle reminds us that most of the time, we must choose between the wrong and less bad options. She is deceptive, opportunistic, and apologetic, all of which she accepts with frankness. This acceptance eventually allows her to let go of the hardships and tensions that had become her nemesis.

Surpanakha is the one who brings gloom to Sita's virtuosity. Vishwamitra is seduced by Menaka, who contrasts his strength and frailty, his lofty aim, and his sensual cravings. Satyawati is the one who brings out the defects in Bhishma's otherwise perfect character. Such overshadowed ladies are typically one-half of the big protagonists in our mythology. What is Vishwamitra without a Menaka? They unite the two halves of the world and finish the plot and the lead, as Urmila did to Sita or Satyawati did to Bhishma. Ravan is nonsensical without Surpanakha. Smash and Lakshman couldn't have fought Ravan without Surpanakha.

It is these lesser-known ladies that have their own stories to tell across both epics. They give tension and a conclusion to the story while pushing it to a higher level of intensity. Uruvi, a fictitious person, is Karna's wife, a pundit, and a sutradhar who tells his story as Karna's significant other. Satyawati's story parallels Bhishma's, showing the Kuru family's rise and collapse alongside Hastinapur's. Surprisingly, these insignificant characters have a lasting influence. Menaka kills Vishwamitra, but she is the impetus for his fall and later ascent to grandeur and enlightenment. Surpanakha, like Draupadi in the Mahabharata, is responsible for the conflict that erupts on the sandy coasts of Lanka, while being an opponent. Satyawati's appearance heralds the Mahabharata's spectacular play of politics and intrigue.

Under the weight of male dominance, Mary Wollstonecraft believed that expecting to please men made women compliant and submissive. They were humiliated by inferiors. "Delicacy, quietness, and spaniel-like commitment are consistently proposed as their cardinal excellencies," Wollstonecraft says, "she was made to be man's toy, his clatter, and it should jingle in his ears whenever he decides to be entertained" (38). As part of a woman's socialization, she is taught to internalize patriarchy from the moment she is born. In all of her works, Kavita Kané refutes this androcentric viewpoint. Helen Cixous argues for a feminine tone of composition in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, which she refers to as "white ink" and "écriture feminine." Kavita Kané produces this "white ink" literature by pushing the boundaries of writing to include female subjectivity.

Kavita Kané's message is undisputed. Women can think critically and lead well. She debunks the misconception that a woman is formed for a man, and she possesses the ability to

recognize and project her inborn emotions. She gives the female mind a place in literature to enjoy true existence, which has been denied to it on social, political, monetary, and literary levels. Kavita Kané, an Indian writer, does not deny the existence of women but rather strives to establish the individuality of her heroes. She seeks to prove that virtues or characteristics such as valiance, boldness, fearlessness, dominance, intensity, love, compassion, affection, forgiveness, uniqueness, self-expression, self-identity, and independence may exist in both sexes

## **Conclusion**

Through her novels, Kavita Kané consistently demonstrates an effort to subvert hegemonic paradigms by giving voice to marginalized characters, challenging established narratives, and offering alternative perspectives. By exploring the inner lives, desires, and struggles of these characters, Kané challenges traditional notions of gender, caste, and societal expectations, ultimately encouraging readers to question and reimagine existing power structures. Kané has placed her champion on the battlefield, where she struggles between meekness and distinction. The clever innovation of "connecting people and their way of behaving and bodies are judged and against which they police themselves" (Sawicki 68) results in Menaka's body's capitulation. Thus, Menaka represents both resignation and defiance since she can ascend above Indra's rules but also becomes enslaved by her status as an apsara who fails to oppose the system. Kané has created folklore that reflects its sources, covers women's abuse and coercion, and reveals their untold desires and experiences. The focus shows that women's bodies are a threat to men's otherworldliness. Kavita Kané's novels offer a thought-provoking examination of subverted hegemonic paradigms. Through her portrayal of empowered female characters, her reimagining of religious narratives and her exploration of unconventional societal dynamics, Kané challenges traditional power structures and prompts readers to question and rethink established norms. Her works contribute to the broader discourse on inclusivity, diversity, and the reevaluation of dominant ideologies. By subverting hegemonic paradigms, Kané opens up new possibilities for empowerment, representation, and social change within the realm of literature and beyond.

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